

Jaakko Kähäri & Anna Kotaviita (eds.)

PROMOTING INTERCULTURAL MANAGEMENT FOR WORKING LIFE IN THE BALTIC SEA REGION

A Five-Year Project. Thoughts, Experiences and Impact



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D•24

**Promoting Intercultural
Management for Working Life in
the Baltic Sea Region**
A Five-Year Project.
Thoughts, Experiences and Impact
Jaakko Kähäri & Anna Kotaviita (eds.)

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Education and Culture
Lifelong Learning Programme



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Introduction

Intercultural management and communication skills have become an essential part of the professional competences that are required from employees to succeed in today's working life. Regardless of the field, the fact that businesses are increasingly expanding their activities across national borders creates a need for managers and experts to be more culturally aware and sensitive in order to apply their skills and knowledge in intercultural settings. Even though intercultural communication is not a particularly new phenomenon, its importance in education has recently started to gain more and more recognition, thus having a strong effect on how educational institutions plan their curricula and internationalization strategies. However, there are still numerous institutions even at the higher education level that do not offer studies on intercultural communication and management - neither as mandatory parts of different curricula nor as separate voluntary study courses.

“Promoting Intercultural Management for Working Life in the Baltic Sea Region” (PIM) is an intensive study program founded by Senior Lecturer Kristina Henriksson from Laurea University of Applied Sciences and Professor Bernd Waldeck from Kiel University of Applied Sciences as a cross-border cooperation effort. The idea was to meet a need in regional higher education by offering intercultural management and communication studies that are accessible to students of all fields, even to those who would not necessarily be able to study the subject at their home universities. PIM has been arranged annually since 2006 and it became part of the European Commission's Lifelong Learning Program in 2007. Over the course of the past five years PIM has contributed to higher education in the Baltic Sea region by gathering teachers and students from eight different countries to study, learn, and build networks together, each year in a different location and with a new student group.

This publication celebrates the five-year history of PIM by sharing experiences and good practices regarding multicultural intensive programs as well as presenting views on the future of intercultural management and communication in the Baltic Sea region and Europe. The contents are divided into two parts - Part One introduces PIM in more detail and features diverse articles by various PIM participants ranging from organizers to students whereas the texts in Part Two provide a more general outlook on intercultural management and communication in education and working life.

The main objective of this publication is to share the experiences and thoughts of the writers, who have in one way or another participated in the organizing of PIM, or studying in PIM, or being part of the networks of PIM. The pedagogical value of the publication lies in the articles written by people with different types and levels of experience in the intensive program while being in different development phases. This publication is neither a scientific publication nor a research report of any kind.

The starting point for the learning process in PIM has been cultural awareness. Without understanding where one's own cultural assumptions and values come from one cannot learn to really understand the cultures of others. The concepts in this publication are used by the authors from the perspective of their own knowledge base. Multiculturalism mainly means co-existence of peoples with different cultural backgrounds, while intercultural activities already require deeper interaction between the people with different cultural identities or backgrounds. For example, the starting point for a student team with members from different countries is that the team is multicultural. It cannot be an intercultural team without having worked together for a common aim, for example. The process develops the team so that their communication becomes intercultural after a while.

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I PIM Articles

An overview on the Intensive Program "Promoting Intercultural Management for Working Life in the Baltic Sea Region"

Jaakko Kähäri

"Promoting Intercultural Management for Working Life in the Baltic Sea Region" (PIM) is an annual two-week intensive program (IP) that is coordinated by Laurea University of Applied Sciences (Laurea UAS). PIM is funded by the European Union (EU) thus being part of the European Commission's Lifelong Learning Program. The participating teachers and students represent the PIM partner consortium that currently consists of eleven higher education institutions from seven countries in the Baltic Sea region. Laurea UAS has been the coordinating institution since the beginning whereas the country in which PIM takes place, along with the host institution, changes every year. The purpose of this article is to provide the reader with an overview of what one needs to know about PIM in order to make the most of reading the other articles in this publication.

Rationale and Objectives

PIM aims at creating strong European networks of professionals by fostering the student and teaching staff mobility of the higher education institutions (HEIs) in the Baltic Sea region and promoting their cooperation with enterprises. Based on a mutually beneficial symbiosis between education and working life, the rationale behind PIM is to approach the positive development of the multicultural Europe by improving the quality and internationalization of European higher education, thus producing more competent and culturally aware workforce. Providing the staff of the participating HEIs with opportunities to exchange good practices and discuss different approaches to teaching contributes to better expertise in equipping the future professionals, that is, the students with the right attitudes towards equal rights and cultural awareness as well as the appropriate competences to face and combat

phenomena such as racism and xenophobia already before they enter working life (Henriksson 2009).

PIM is designed to promote the participating students' skills in intercultural management with a multidisciplinary approach. The overall objective is to provide the students with a theoretical and practical knowledge of intercultural communication. The studies include topics such as cultural theories, interpersonal skills, teamwork, negotiations, conflict resolution, and intercultural expertise. During the intensive program the students work in intercultural teams which makes them encounter intercultural challenges and use their intercultural management and communication skills continuously throughout the program. In order to keep the students motivated and ensure effective learning the program incorporates diverse study methods such as lectures, report writing, authentic case studies, role plays, and event management. (Henriksson 2009.)

History

The history of PIM dates back to the year 2005 when the founding members Kristina Henriksson, Senior Lecturer at Laurea UAS and Professor Bernd Waldeck from Kiel University of Applied Sciences decided to create an intensive study program to promote intercultural communication between students and teachers from different higher education institutions in the Baltic Sea region. Kristina Henriksson agreed to coordinate the project and designed the original concept and teaching program in cooperation with Professor Waldeck. Since then PIM has been coordinated by Kristina Henriksson and the annually changing PIM Team that consists of students from Laurea UAS and occasionally from other partner institutions. The project organization has functioned well; working in the PIM Team has provided numerous students with opportunities to do their internships and Bachelor's theses focusing on organizing and developing the program, which has helped them to progress with their studies and the program to become better every year.

The first PIM that was organized in Jelgava, Latvia, in the year 2006 was a pilot designed to find out about students' interest in intensive intercultural study programs. The program was hosted by the Latvian University of Agriculture and the participating 40 students and eight teachers represented six countries that were Finland, Latvia, Estonia, Germany, Lithuania, and Russia. The program turned out to be a great success among the participants which motivated the organizers to continue and develop the project. PIM2007,

the second pilot program, took place in Eckernförde, Germany, and was rather similar to its predecessor with some changes in the teaching program. It was also the first time the PIM students arranged the Meeting Point student fair that has been an essential part of PIM ever since.

After two successful pilots the PIM consortium received EU funding for the IP that became part of the Erasmus Lifelong Learning Program of international mobility. PIM2008 that was arranged in Tallinn, Estonia, was the first of its kind as it was the first PIM that was funded by the EU. It was hosted by the Estonian IT College. In 2009, PIM headed to Alytus, Lithuania, with the Alytus College of Higher Education as the host institution. PIM2010 took place in two locations in Poland and was hosted by the University of Economy in Bydgoszcz.

Impact and Future

Since the beginning, PIM has generated wide interest among HEIs in the Baltic Sea region as well as the local media and people in the different towns serving as its venue. Moreover, the impact of PIM reaches beyond the field of education through the student teams' project work that is carried out in cooperation with enterprises. So far, approximately 40 organizations - ranging from local art galleries to international transport companies - have contributed to and benefited from the PIM students' project work by sharing and discussing experiences and good practices in intercultural management. The PIM concept is of such a topical nature that even bodies that are not directly related to the study program, such as the Finnish Committee for European Security (STETE) , have started to take interest in its unique approach to creating international networks and improving the relationships between different countries.

After five years of successful PIM programs and the ending of the first three-year funding round the coordinators have decided to take some time off from organizing the program. Even though the concept has clearly been successful, the coordinators have identified changes in the way the newest generation of students study, interact, and most importantly learn, which in the coordinators' opinion necessitates certain refinements in the study methods and ways of teaching. The break will be dedicated to analyzing the needs of the future student generations and developing the program accordingly in order to continue providing the Baltic Sea region with the kind of educational benefits PIM was originally designed for.

Jaakko Kähäri

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From Idea to Realization – Five Years of PIM Intensive Programs

Kristina Henriksson & Bernd Waldeck

Not until the 1970s and 1980s did scientists in the management sciences realize the importance and impact of the different cultures in their fields. Cultural studies as a science is relatively new compared with many other sciences. A lot of well educated managers failed to do their jobs in cultures they were not accustomed to. Without knowledge and unintentionally, they used management approaches that proved unsuccessful in practice and were seen as rude, even insulting and resulting in losing face by their subordinates in other countries and cultures. Still, teaching about cultural differences and how to manage and solve problems in other cultural environments than one's own is only now becoming more common.

Based on these facts, the authors, Kristina Henriksson from Laurea University of Applied Sciences (Laurea UAS) and Bernd Waldeck from Kiel University of Applied Sciences (Kiel UAS), developed lectures at their own universities and taught theory and facts about the thinking processes and behavior in different cultures and how to solve problems that are likely to arise from not taking the fact of different perceptions, thinking and behavior in other cultures into account.

Both authors are members of the Baltic Sea Network (BSN), a loose affiliation of universities in the Baltic Sea region that had previously been established to promote joint activities and shared knowledge between the participating universities, colleges and enterprises. The BSN had set itself the task of initiating cross border research projects, seminars, market research and so on. The network organizes Partner Days annually, where partners meet and share information, even have conference presentations, and find partners for projects. At the Partner Days in November 2005 the authors met for the first time and the rest is history; the five-year long project on Promoting Intercultural Management for Working Life in the Baltic Sea Region (PIM) was born.

The soon-to-be founding members of PIM, Kristina Henriksson and Bernd Waldeck participated in the Baltic Sea Network Partner Days in St Petersburg, Russia in November 2005 with the objective to launch a new project dealing with intercultural management. The authors developed the idea of an intensive course on intercultural management for students of the universities affiliated in the BSN.

The Partner Days provided partners for the project, and great enthusiasm soon surrounded the activities around PIM. The founding members took on the responsibility of organizing the first intensive program - the venue was decided by the BSN Coordinator as Jelgava in Latvia and was to take place in May 2006.

The authors took on the challenges, which were not lacking. The timeframe was short to create an intensive program in a few months without funding. The teaching program needed to be designed and teaching staff needed to be recruited. After returning to their home universities the authors developed an outline for the content of the intensive course, and the necessary partners were in place, as well as lecturers, time schedules and so forth. The first teaching program took its more advanced shape during a long meeting in the city of Hyvinkää in Finland, during two long days in the cold winter. Teaching staff was found from those higher education institution partners (HEIs) who joined the intensive program project already in St Petersburg. Meeting again after some weeks the authors started to address their BSN partner universities with the developed plans and asked for confirmation of their participation and lecturers who could deliver parts of the course program. That had since been a rotating process because one university terminated its participation, others joined in and new lecturers had to be found for additional or developed parts of the program.

Another challenge was organizing the event with very small funds. The partners decided that the program was to be self-funded until external funding would be received. The hosting university, the University of Agriculture in Jelgava, was extremely helpful in finding reasonable alternatives for accommodation and catering.

Before the intensive program took place in Jelgava the project team created the teaching program, found lecturers to teach and develop the contents, and finally a more developed description of the studies was formulated together with evaluation criteria. For all intensive programs of PIM, Laurea UAS has employed students working on their internships and / or theses to work as

assistants in the organizing of the events. They have provided an invaluable contribution in making the events become a reality.

First Location - Jelgava

The locations for the intensive program were selected in order to introduce participants to places they would otherwise never typically visit and to familiarize them with their neighboring countries and cultures. Also, the locations were selected with respect to the level of the cost of living. Since the students had to - at least partially - finance their participation in the program themselves the project consortium tried to find locations with assumed low living costs.

Jelgava, Latvia, was the first choice in 2006. Jelgava was also the place where the BSN Partner Days 2006 took place. The hosting partner was the Latvia University of Agriculture which is accommodated in the beautiful and recently renovated Palace of Jelgava, built in the 18th century.

The intensive course, now named “Promoting Intercultural Management Competencies for Working Life in the Baltic Sea Region” had participating students from Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, and Russia. Lecturers from these countries also participated in the teaching program. The students stayed at the dormitory of the university.

The students were organized in several teams, each with participants from different countries in order to encourage them to speak English most of the time and to learn and implement in practice the important skills of intercultural communication. In addition, the organizers hoped they would make friends with their team members. They were asked to sit together as a team during the lectures and to collaborate in the practical parts of the different sessions. This became the way the students were organized during all the following PIMs as well.

As in all the intensive program events, after an early dinner in the evening when the students had a little spare time, they would swarm out to the city to get to know the place and each other. The feedback received from the students was that they had a lot of fun together and in many cases they made new friends. Nonetheless, they always attended the lectures on time and other mandatory activities.

During the event the students and lecturers made a study visit to Riga, the capital of Latvia. The students travelled around the city in their teams, and interviewed people on the street about their opinions on the European Union. In addition, the students had the opportunity to see the beautiful city and its sights.

An unforgettable amusing incident could be mentioned here. When the students were to do research using their own laptops, there was a misunderstanding regarding access to the university's computers and the wireless internet connection. Although the internet was available in the library, unfortunately the library was closed. Resourceful students as they were, many of them sat gathered on the floor next to the door of the library and had access to the internet after all. Bearing in mind the time when the palace, now functioning as the university, was built, one can understand that in 2006 the wireless connection did not pass through the thick walls.

To look back to the first event of PIM, one can conclude that what was lacking in official funding and documentation was compensated by the wonderful PIM spirit in the whole group of students and lecturers. All participants were working hard, enjoying the Latvian culture around them. For example, they had the chance to experience Latvian students singing and dancing to Latvian folk music. The small student city provided excellent leisure activities for the participating students as to where they spent the little time left over from study activities. Even the hotel had great facilities for group meetings and during the last evening the assistants organized a sauna evening with refreshments. Regarding the hotel, it was an interesting experience to stay at Hotel Jelgava. Always when walking up to one's room or downstairs again, one had to walk through the second floor corridor which was filled with chairs placed next to the walls. On the chairs sat people who were waiting to be called into the adjacent rooms. The rooms housed the naturalization office, where the people took a test to become naturalized.

The first PIM was a success, according to the students and teachers! Much was experienced and there was more than enough for the project team to consider when developing the program for the following event, with only a year to work on it. Encouraged by the partner consortium, great students, lecturers, and the event in general, the project team decided to write an application during the next call for applications to the EU Erasmus Intensive Programs for funding. However in the meantime, another event was being created, this time in Germany.

The Second PIM - Eckernförde

Both the coordinator and other members in the teacher team were one experience wiser and the developing of the program took place during the following 12 months. The project consortium still wanted to visit places which were not on the typical tourist agenda. This time the city of Eckernförde in Germany was selected for the venue.

The Kiel UAS had excellent premises in Eckernförde where the event could be hosted. The city is very attractive and provided a great atmosphere for an international event such as PIM. It was easy to organize the intensive program in Germany, and most of what had been agreed and promised actually took place.

One change in the program was to let the students organize a fair for the general public in the location. They needed to plan their own stands, where they would introduce their own culture, some enterprises from their country and preferably their university or college. In addition, they needed to plan together with the other students from the different participating countries how to do the marketing for the event. The planning was not enough, for they actually needed to implement the plan itself in real life. Since they were responsible for filling the venue with local people, when there were not enough people visiting in the early hours of the fair, the students had to walk downtown to advertise the event and invite people to visit the fair. Some students were dressed in their national costumes and were able to draw the attention of the German citizens in Eckernförde.

The fair - Meeting Point Eckernförde - was a great success! Locals who came stayed for hours and enjoyed every moment and visited every stand. Students provided samples of local drinks and dishes for the guests, they taught the visitors and other students and teachers the national anthem of each participating country, and other entertainment was offered as well. The atmosphere was unbelievable and the students and lecturers could feel that the event was without doubt something to remember.

The students had to visit and explore carefully selected companies and organizations using their newly acquired knowledge and skills. These organizations provided very memorable visits for the students. As examples of the visits two can be mentioned here. The visit to the art gallery Nemo was an excellent experience for the visitors, as the person they met dedicated a lot of time to the students, having tremendous knowledge of dealing with people

from different cultures. Another visit for some other students was the army's navy base, where the students received a lot of information and a tour on the waters around Eckernförde.

Good news arrived that very same spring and summer of 2007. The consortium had finally made it to the list of accepted applications and funding was received for the following intensive program that would take place in spring 2008.

For the first time in PIM history the plan was to have the event in a capital city, Tallinn, Estonia. The organizing was once again taken care of by Laurea UAS, Kristina Henriksson and her team of student assistants, luckily one of whom spoke Estonian. The consortium is still very grateful for this asset!

Third Time - Now in Estonia's Capital, Tallinn

After receiving the exciting news of funding for the intensive program, the project consortium faced new challenges. From the start the consortium had run the program as if it were funded with regard to EU demands and instructions, in case funding would be received at some point. The practicing of most EU regulations was naturally useful since it was rather easy to adapt the program into the EU framework of Lifelong Learning. PIM2008 was thus the first funded program by the EU. While the decision had already been made that the program take place in Tallinn, the organizers proceeded with applying all EU rules to the planning and organizing of the intensive program.

The hosting HEI in Tallinn was IT College, a private college specializing in providing education in ICT. The facilities were new as the building had just been completed. The college provided us with excellent teaching facilities and for once the internet connection was functioning, compared to the previous problems the consortium had occasionally faced at earlier events. Every participant was very pleased to realize this.

Already during PIM2007 the consortium had a new partner, the Technical Academy in Copenhagen. The Danes incorporated in the program a visual tool to implement intercultural management when designing a user interface. Thus the intensive program developed with not only representatives of a new culture but also very interesting skills to learn. The Danish input by Susanne Lund brought a new perspective to the teaching and learning of intercultural management, providing a multifaceted view of the skills that can be implemented in working life.

The IP would receive a new partner, the University of Economy in Bydgoszcz, Poland, for this event in 2008. In the planning stage the teaching program was to take new teachers as well into consideration, which was also accomplished. Other challenges included finding suitable accommodation for a suitable price and how to transport students to the college. Student housing was not available, but the resourceful assistants organizing the event found a hostel that could accommodate the group at a reasonable price. One novelty in the planning process was to include a former PIM student from PIM2007 from Denmark to work as an intern in PIM2008, Pamela Juhl, who is actually an American. She provided her intercultural skills for the use of the team and helped in the running of the daily activities together with the assistants. In addition, Pamela Juhl documented parts of the event with her camera, as she is a professional photographer as well.

While the contents of the program were being developed over the years, the students were always the main content of the event. It was their presence and attitudes with their levels of activity that actually formed the events the most. When in Tallinn, the venue for the Meeting Point Tallinn was conveniently situated in the center of the Old Town, by the market square. This was absolutely a wonderfully strategic place to organize an event to introduce the group, their cultural features, some enterprises, and universities and colleges as well. The students succeeded very well in inviting lots of visitors to the international event. Not only local Estonians but very exotic visitors studied the stands of the students and talked with them, some of them meeting people of the Baltic Sea region for the first time. Many of the visitors came from an American cruiser that was in Tallinn harbor for the day. Students did excellent marketing of their home towns and countries.

Fourth Event - Alytus, Lithuania

Loyal to the idea of organizing the event at a location where one would not normally travel to as a typical tourist, the consortium decided that the venue for 2009 was to take place in Alytus, Lithuania. The original plan was to organize the event in Vilnius, the European Culture Capital of 2009. Unfortunately Vilnius College of Higher Education, one of the partners in the consortium, could not provide accommodation for the participants that year. However, Alytus College offered to host the event and the consortium was very glad to have the offer and accepted immediately.

Despite the remote location of Alytus, Senior Lecturer Andrius Valickas from Vilnius College was extremely responsible and active in helping with the organizing of the event, for instance with regard to finding enterprises for student visits and helping with local transportation. Together with Vilnius College the hosting organization, Alytus College, cooperated excellently in the arrangements.

As the intensive program was under continuous development, one of the development aims was now to develop student selection processes and the teaching program during the planning phase. The local tourist office collaborated with the assistants when they were organizing the necessities for the event.

Alytus was very different from Vilnius for all participants. The city is not very big but the people were friendly and helpful everywhere. Not very many people spoke English in Alytus, but one could mostly get by using Lithuanian or Russian. However, in the pharmacy it was quite funny how a common language was discovered, as the pharmacist did not speak English or German, but the business could luckily be taken care of in French!

The college had good facilities in providing the venue for the intensive program. It was recently renovated and student housing was very comfortable. Also one previous PIM student from PIM2008, Linas Vaitulionis from Alytus College, worked as an assistant in the Laurea interns' team during the event. His help was priceless for the success of the program, and he was always available and willing to cooperate with any kinds of challenges and needs.

The most memorable extracurricular happening took place when the group was in Vilnius on a visit. The group met Sir Roger Moore with his wife. This event is documented in a photograph taken by one of Sir Roger Moore's staff members on a student's mobile phone. Another memorable curricular activity was the special guest lecturer, Richard Gesteland, and his enlightening and refreshing lecture on Intercultural Management. Everyone present found his lecture the best of the whole program!

Fifth PIM Traveling to Bydgoszcz

The consortium had already received a new partner the previous year, the International School of Law and Business that is based in Vilnius, Lithuania. The new partner in the Tallinn event, the University of Economy in Bydgoszcz was very eager to have the honor of hosting the intensive program and the

consortium was pleased to agree to organize the event in Poland. Other new partners for PIM2010 in Poland included the Copenhagen University College of Engineering as well as the two external partners from Russia, Saint-Petersburg State University of Service and Economics and Saint-Petersburg State University of Technologies, Mechanics and Optics.

By the year 2009, when PIM2010 was in the planning stage, a great many changes were taking place in the intensive program. Teaching was streamlined, more cooperation took place between the teachers, more ECTS were offered for the students depending on the amount of work they were willing to do and the event was being planned to take place at two different locations. Special attention was paid to the partners selecting the participating students. At the planning meeting in November 2009, it was emphasized that students without much prior international experience were those who would gain the most of the intensive program.

The host university and their international department were extremely helpful in the organizing of the event. The first location was Perla, a recreational wellness center in the countryside in the surroundings of the city of Bydgoszcz where the whole group stayed under the same roof. Having all people together for the first week was genius, because no time was wasted on traveling the distances to and from the classes and because all participants were forced to get to know each other rather well, since there were no other people apart from the staff of Perla. The whole PIM spirit was established very quickly among the participants, which strengthened the “we-feeling” togetherness that existed during the whole event and even after. Students had the opportunity to practice the few words of Polish they had picked up already in Perla.

The second intensive week, the venue of which was Bydgoszcz, started already during the first week: the Meeting Point Bydgoszcz fair in Bydgoszcz. The venue was a lovely building by the river and provided apt surroundings for the fair. Lots of people visited the fair and Polish knights told the visitors a little about the history of the city. The atmosphere of the fair was warm and welcoming, with happy faces and much interaction. The fair was streamed online and had quite a few spectators in other countries.

Bydgoszcz was a different experience for the participants. Whereas in Perla everything was in front of the participants in Bydgoszcz the students needed to travel to and from their hotel to the university. There were several big events taking place in the city simultaneously so it was not easy to accommodate the

students in the same place, which has always been a priority for the consortium. It is important that the students live together because it is part of their learning process. However, the city provided apt surroundings even for PIM and seemed very international with all the other events taking place at the same time.

Final Thoughts

During the five-year project the authors have realized that people are at the same time quite similar and different. Even if the peoples around the Baltic Sea live close to each other, there are distinct similarities and differences. These can be discovered when one spends more time with others from different cultural origins. Only when one is facing a situation beyond one's comfort zone can one meet the challenges in developing one's own skills in intercultural communication and management. When one is day-and-night in a strange environment with a group consisting of individuals with different cultural backgrounds, one is forced to face the challenges. PIM has enabled this experience, hopefully providing food for thought for the future for all participants.

The project consortium is very proud to have been part of this five-year project. The founding members wish to thank all the people who have made the project possible: the students, the interns who have worked for the project, the enterprises and organizations and other interest groups, the partners and finally the teachers and guest lecturers.

What has been realized is the fact that it is not easy getting local students involved in the event taking place in their own city. Local students are not as passionate about the event as those students taking part from neighboring countries, as the novelty of the location is part of the appeal and learning experience. In addition, when an intensive program like PIM is organized in a location, the local students have other commitments that require their attendance, attention and time. It is highly recommended that an intensive program takes place in a third country, meaning that it takes place in a country and city which is no one's home town or country. It also enables learning and absorbs the participants with a completely different alert mindset.

Kristina Henriksson

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Hosting PIM as an Important Factor in the Internationalization Process of the University of Economy in Bydgoszcz

Łukasz Jasiński

Since the foundation of the University of Economy in Bydgoszcz (WSG) in 1999, the internationalization of the institution has been playing a significant role in its development. The first step towards accomplishing this aim was to establish new partnerships with foreign higher education institutions (HEIs). To specify, cooperation with such partners as the Université Toulouse II-Le Mirail and the Heilbronn University of Applied Sciences have had a positive impact on the process of implementing international standards and high quality teaching forms at our university. Signing bilateral agreements enabled us not only to invite first foreign teachers to hold guest lectures at our university and send first students abroad, but also to organize the first international conferences and students' workshops in Bydgoszcz.

The next very important point that has had a positive influence on the development of the international cooperation was our successful application for the Erasmus University Charter in the year 2005 that allowed us to receive European Union (EU) funding for student and teacher exchange and participation in the Erasmus Intensive Programs. During the next few years we managed to establish numerous partnerships with over thirty HEIs from twenty EU countries (Germany, Finland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Czech Republic, Great Britain, France, Spain, Netherlands, and Portugal among others).

Joining PIM

It should be noticed that the established relationships with the said partner institutions resulted in us joining new networks connecting different foreign HEIs. In the year 2007, owing to one of our most important international partners, Laurea University of Applied Sciences (Laurea UAS) from Finland, we received an invitation to take part in the Partner Days of the Baltic Sea Network in Eckernförde, Germany. The meeting not only resulted in

establishing new contacts and signing new bilateral agreements but also provided us with the details of the Erasmus Intensive Program (IP) called “Promoting Intercultural Management for Working Life in the Baltic Sea Region” (PIM). During my stay in Eckernförde I had the opportunity to take part in the evaluation meeting of PIM2007. The PIM teaching content and methods were so interesting that I asked the Project Coordinator Kristina Henriksson from Laurea UAS to consider the possibility of involving WSG in the project. As at that time the consortium was looking for a partner institution from Poland, we were allowed to take part in PIM2008 which took place in May 2008 in Tallinn, Estonia. This was the beginning of our involvement in the PIM project.

A big number of students from WSG were willing to take part first in PIM2008 in Tallinn and later in PIM2009 in Alytus, Lithuania, and the very positive opinions and reports we received from the students and teachers selected to participate in the IP were not surprising to us. Getting familiar with theoretical and practical knowledge of intercultural communication seems to be playing a more and more important role in the labor market in the age of globalization in the new EU countries like Poland. Unfortunately, these abilities are still underestimated in the field of education; consequently, classes covering the above issues are missing in the majority of the curricula at Polish universities and other higher education institutions. The possibility of spending two weeks abroad and making new acquaintances with students from different countries created such a wide interest among the WSG students that it became problematic for the jury to only select a few students from a big group of candidates to participate in PIM. Being part of such a successful project, we decided during the PIM2008 evaluation meeting in Copenhagen in November 2008 to make a proposal to the project coordinators to host the next edition of the IP in Bydgoszcz. To our joy the consortium agreed to put Bydgoszcz into the application form as the venue of PIM2010.

It should be stated that it was a pleasure to gain the trust of our partners and to have this possibility to organize such an interesting and big international event at our university. Moreover, the positive feedback from numerous teachers who had visited us in the last years as well as from many students who were studying at our university as Erasmus exchange students or took part in international workshops such as “WSG Entrepreneur Cup” (a simulation game with more than 50 participants every year from different partner institutions) at our university made us optimistic that PIM2010 in Bydgoszcz would be a big success.

The event was also a very important factor in the internationalization process of our university. Being a partner of an international project with international teaching content, innovative teaching methods and teachers and students from abroad is the most important part of the internationalization strategy of almost every higher educational institution.

Preparing for PIM2010

The preparation for the event started already in November 2009 in Bydgoszcz during the working session that brought together project coordinators from the participating institutions from Finland, Germany, Estonia, Lithuania, Russia, and Poland. Our first decision was to establish a team responsible for organizing PIM that consisted of three employees of the International Office of WSG (Łukasz Jasiński, Małgorzata Rumińska, Natalia Błaszczuk) and a former PIM student (Anna Afek). All the members of this internal WSG PIM team tried to do their best to reach a successful completion of the specific project goals and objectives. Despite the fact that organizing PIM comes with great responsibility we were very enthusiastic and looking forward to meeting teachers and students from our partner institutions in Bydgoszcz.

The primary challenge for us was the very organization of the event. As the host we were responsible for arranging accommodation and transportation for the PIM participants for the whole period of the event. We were also assigned to provide each of the eight student teams with contacts and meeting arrangements with representatives of public institutions and private companies in Bydgoszcz that have multicultural experience. At this point we realized, not for the first time, that the attitudes of people representing different nations may differ regarding planning things in advance. Almost all the companies and institutions agreed on the meetings with the PIM students but they seemed to be very surprised that the arrangements were made four months in advance. On one hand, some entrepreneurs explained that the meetings might be rescheduled. On the other hand, the project coordinator expected us to prepare a detailed list of the institutions and meeting times as early as possible. Fortunately, the planned meetings took place and were successful. However, this experience already highlighted the significance of intercultural differences even for us.

The IP Weeks

The students spent the first week of PIM in Tleń that is a beautiful village surrounded by forest-upland area. They were accommodated at the Perta health farm. We were very glad to hear that they found it comfortable and that they started achieving positive communication. Despite low temperatures and pouring rain students and teachers seemed to be very satisfied - new people, exciting classes, and leisure time activities made the weather conditions less of an issue.

After the first week of the IP we welcomed the students to our university. Our guests arrived on Friday 15th May after a sightseeing trip in Toruń, the town where Nicolaus Copernicus was born. In spite of having spent a long day, first studying in class, then travelling and sightseeing, the group was willing to present their international stands and rehearse for the Meeting Point Bydgoszcz fair (MPB) that would take place the next day.

Organizing the multicultural fair in the Academic Cultural Space (APK) of WSG turned out to be a success. The guests of the event were not only students and teachers of our university, who came to see the national stands even with their families, but also a big number of Bydgoszcz locals. Many wanted to have direct contact with different cultures and take the opportunity to ask foreigners about their homeland, people, tradition, habits, and the way they see our country. The guests also had the opportunity to taste food from different parts of Europe and take part in amusing competitions that had been prepared by the students.

Despite the language barrier, some PIM students went to the city center to invite inhabitants to come and visit the fair. It was nice to see that people from Bydgoszcz showed their positive attitude towards foreigners and many of them accepted the invitation with pleasure. MPB gave many people - not only students and teachers - the possibility to meet people from foreign countries and to speak with them. It had a good influence on the way people perceive foreigners and contributed at least to some degree to a change in the way of thinking about them. In a country like Poland, where history still plays a very important role in perceiving other nationalities, events like MPB seem to have a very positive influence on challenging stereotypes.

The diverse study methods of PIM included authentic case studies and therefore the student teams were to meet with representatives of different public institutions and private companies in Bydgoszcz. We were positively surprised by how many of them wanted to be involved in the projects and

showed their willingness and readiness to receive foreign students. It is worth mentioning that the student teams had the opportunity to meet representatives of the City Hall's Department of Culture and International Cooperation, the Hieronim Konieczka Polish Theatre, the Opera Nova, the Convention bureau, the City Gallery, the Leon Wyczółkowski District Museum, the Best Inn Hotel, and the local newspaper MM Bydgoszcz.

Each group of students discussed international activities with the representatives of their designated institution. Most of the representatives of the institutions from our city reported that such a meeting with a group of students from abroad was a very unique and interesting experience. What they liked most was the students' different points of view on some international issues and their remarks. This is why we can assume that the meetings were beneficial both for the students and the cooperating companies and institutions. The final result of all the meetings were the students' project reports which were later discussed with all student groups and lecturers. It is worth mentioning that a few days after PIM was over the Director of the Opera Nova asked us to present the student report and found it very interesting.

The participants of PIM spent a lot of time together and had the chance to make friends and get to know each other better not only during study tasks but also during common suppers and other social events lasting until late in the evening. One such event included playing the guitar and singing songs from different countries and during this night one could feel that people though from different countries all have the same roots and understand each other perfectly despite being brought up in different cultures.

Conclusion

On the last day of PIM the participants received the certificates of course completion. The students reflected that they could learn a lot from this experience and that such a project gives them the opportunity to gain useful knowledge and skills, which could not be learned otherwise. Most of the students liked Bydgoszcz so much that they decided to vote for it in the competition for the European Capital of Culture 2016. For us it was very nice to hear that students from abroad could notice the beauty of our city and our country. Many of them, mainly from Western Europe, admitted that Poland is actually not the country they had thought it would be before coming to Bydgoszcz. Although the students noticed the poor English skills - which are unfortunately typical for people living in post-soviet countries - of some Polish

people, they were positively surprised by Polish hospitality, spontaneity, openness, and willingness to help.

From the academic point of view, teachers from different countries had a great opportunity to exchange experiences during the international workshops. This will surely have a positive impact on introducing new methods of teaching at our university, based mainly not on theoretical knowledge but more on practice, of which the former is still quite common at Polish universities. This change in the way of teaching is a long-term process but events like PIM will certainly accelerate it.

Today we are proud to say that we were able to build up such a good cooperation with our partner institutions and that we managed our part of the joint responsibility during the PIM intensive program for all these years. The event was an important step forward in the internationalization of our university. Like for all the PIM students and teachers, this event will be an unforgettable lifetime experience for us.

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Four Points of View – Letters from PIM Alumni

Linda Meriluoto, Victoria Rombonen, Henning De Carne & Matthias Kumberger - Edited by Jaakko Kähäri

In addition to the positive experiences related to the organizing and hosting of an intensive program on intercultural management, to present PIM and its benefits from the students' point of view is important in manifesting its true prominence. In this article, four PIM alumni share their stories of their personal PIM experiences and discuss what they have gained from participating in the program and how it has helped them to progress with their studies and careers. The purpose of these compact stories is to illustrate how a two-week intensive program can have long-term effects on its participants' lives and personal development as well as how the learning experiences and effects are seen after some time has passed since the program.

From PIM Studies to Coordinating an International Team **by Linda Meriluoto**

I participated in the PIM program in the year 2008 when it took place in Tallinn. Back then I was a second-year hospitality management student and applied to the program to internationalize my studies more. The idea of studying abroad together with strangers from all over the Baltic Sea region for two weeks was exciting - I was curious to see what it would be like and did not know what to expect exactly. Before the intensive period in Tallinn we bonded together with our Finnish national team by doing pre-assignments as we did not know each other beforehand since we all represented different study fields.

In Tallinn all the students were divided into groups of four. All the members of each team represented different areas of expertise and nationalities. Besides getting to know more about the different cultures in practice, we improved our English language skills. We also had to get to know each other in a professional way and create our own way to work as an effective team to achieve our goal that was to complete a project report for a company in a

relatively short time. It was a great chance for a student to grow as an expert; I had to trust my own professional skills and share my knowledge with someone who was a specialist in a totally different field. I was more than happy with my team as every member took responsibility for our results. Sometimes the teamwork was surprisingly intensive and our team faced a strong “storming” stage during the two weeks - it should be noticed that we had already spent days together nonstop and the stress grew towards the program’s ending. Personally for me one of the best PIM experiences was to see how the team managed to overcome the difficulties without any help from the outsiders and how it made the team even more cohesive afterwards.

The PIM program was equally valid for all of the participating students despite of what study program or field they represented; the themes of the program were applied and the students learned to see things as a larger whole. Also the teaching methods varied according to every teacher’s home institution and country but we still had to be able to catch the essential information and apply it to our project. The intensive program required capacity to absorb things quickly and also skills to exploit the information you heard for the first time only a minute ago in practice.

My own experience as a PIM student was a bit more far-reaching than usual because after the PIM program I did my study-related internship for the Baltic Sea Network, the organization behind the whole study program. I was working partly at my home institution, Laurea University of Applied Sciences in Finland, and partly at another partner institution, Kiel University of Applied Sciences in Germany. I also did my Bachelor’s thesis on organizational communication for the Baltic Sea Network in cooperation with another PIM2008 student.

Through this experience I learned organizational skills at an international level. It was seen as a big asset when I applied for a job after my studies; I got a permanent job in an international environment at a higher education institution right after my graduation. At my job I have got great opportunities to work internationally in the Baltic Sea Region by using the contacts which I already created during my studies - during the PIM program as well as during my internship I created my own network of teachers and students. After two years we are still in touch with the students from the program in Tallinn, not only as friends visiting each other across the Baltic Sea but also as professionals.

Making the Most of PIM by Victoria Rombonen

My history with PIM started in the year 2007 when the second pilot of the program in Germany was arranged. Back then I had many other school obligations so I could not participate, but the idea of going abroad for two weeks stayed in my mind. One year later one of my friends decided to apply to PIM2008 in Tallinn and asked me to join her. Since the concept of the intensive program had gotten me interested already in the previous year, I decided to apply.

Participating in PIM2008 as a Student

The selection process went well and finally I received the confirmation letter with the message that I had been chosen to participate. My friend was not chosen which was actually fortunate for me, for participating in programs like PIM with a close friend is not such a good idea, as I later realized.

The program started with getting to know all the other PIM students through the virtual platform and meeting with the Finnish national group in person. The arranging of the travelling to Tallinn and the preparation of the Finnish stand for the Meeting Point fair made us get to know each other better.

In Tallinn, the one thing which I can say really brought the whole group together was sharing accommodation and surprisingly enough, the lack of bathrooms at the hostel we were living in. The hostel was basically a big house with three floors and three bathrooms, two of which were located in the rooms of some lucky occupants. There were thirty of us. So every morning, in order to brush our teeth we were queuing to the bathroom and meanwhile getting to know each other better. The shared transportation to the college every day was also helpful in getting people together. Most of the people were really amenable and it was easy to get to know them, while some decided to keep to themselves and were not so easy to get in contact with. The games and other tasks really showed us how hard it can be to work in a team, especially in an intercultural team. It also made us acknowledge a significant difference between all of us, that is, the school system difference. Some students had less problems working in teams than others and some needed more guidance than others.

Besides understanding cultural differences, the program brought one more interesting question to my attention. Because of having two different cultural heritages, since I was born in Russia but had lived in Finland for ten years at

the time of the program, it had become unclear to me what to answer when people asked me whether I considered myself Finnish or Russian. Even though I always said and probably will always say Russian, I realized that the Finnish culture has actually had quite a big effect on how I have built my own mentality. From that time on I started to think a little differently about people who have parents from two different countries or who have moved from their home country at a young age.

The Organizing of PIM2009

In addition to gaining a better understanding of different cultures and intercultural communication, the program also brought a much more practical influence into my life. At the end of the program I got an idea of participating in the organizing of PIM2009 as I had realized that quite a big part of organizing an intensive program has to do with financial management, the subject I was studying at Laurea University of Applied Sciences. Moreover, I really needed a job where I could do my second internship. I approached the Project Coordinator Kristina Henriksson about an opportunity to join the organizational team the following year. After we came back from PIM2008, Ms. Henriksson called me and suggested that I could already start the internship with the financial reporting of PIM2008 and thus gain some useful information on the reporting part of an intensive program's financial management so I could adjust the financial management process of the following year according to that. I decided that it was not such a bad idea, because it enabled me to get the general picture about how things were done in PIM2008 and how they could be done in PIM2009. That was how PIM helped me solve the problem of finding an internship.

In the beginning of the academic year 2009 we recruited more people, one of them being Linas Vaitulionis who was also a PIM2008 participant, a definite asset, since PIM2009 was to take place in Alytus, Lithuania, the hometown of Linas. Besides him, we also recruited a Finnish tourism student and a Russian business management student. Together we formed an international but very functional team.

In the very beginning of the internship I encountered another challenge - I still didn't have a subject for my Bachelor's thesis, and it was already time for me to start writing it. As the PIM programs were funded by the European Union Lifelong Learning Program, we visited CIMO, the Finnish National Agency of International Mobility several times during the organizational period. At CIMO they were very specific about funding and reporting, which resulted in an idea

of the subject for my thesis - since I was a financial assistant of an intensive program it made sense to study and analyze financial administration in organizing intensive programs.

The idea of the thesis was to collect data about the financial part of the organizational process from intensive program coordinators in Finland, specifically the coordinators from Universities of Applied Sciences. Because the home institutions of the financial administrators whom I needed to get in contact with were scattered all over Finland, I decided to create an electronic questionnaire in order to collect the data I needed. In addition to the said data I was also using my own experiences in financial administration and the reporting of intensive programs as material for my study. During my internship I got a clear picture of what works in the financial administration process and the questionnaire results gave me many new ideas on how the process could be developed. During the writing process of my thesis I was collaborating with CIMO - they provided me with material about funding, reporting rules, the history of intensive programs, and other useful information for my project.

Conclusion

Besides the study related opportunities such as the internship and thesis subject, participating in the organizing of PIM gave me a lot of useful experience that helps me in my current job and in other aspects of my life as well. Organizing an intercultural intensive program is a very diverse process during which one learns how to do business in different cultural environments, how to work in an international team and last but not least how to organize events for big groups (around forty students and ten teachers participated in PIM2009). The wide variety of skills that I gained during working on PIM2009 I could never gain anywhere else in such a short period of time.

At the moment I consider myself as some kind of example of an intensive program's success. I gained almost everything possible that one can gain from an intensive program - I participated in one as a student, I worked on one as a member of the organizational team, I conducted research on one, not to mention all the knowledge and skills I gained. I would recommend participating in international intensive programs to everyone regardless of previous international experience. All you need for participating is an open mind and willingness to learn new things.

A Cultural Eye-Opener by Henning de Carne

First of all I want to say that the time I spent with the PIM study program in Jelgava, Latvia in 2006, has been one of my most formative experiences since the start of my studies. My PIM-related learning experiences that also form the structure of this article can be classified in three categories that are Time in Host Country, Course Contents, and Group Dynamics.

Time in Host Country

With respect to Latvia in general and to Jelgava specifically I did not have any expectations related to the host country before PIM2006 as I had never visited Latvia or dealt with Latvians before. Today I regard Latvia as a country of contrasts and I would like to explain it with two examples.

After I arrived in Jelgava and saw my room in which I was supposed to live for the next 12 days I was surprised to put it mildly. The room was really dirty and run-down and I started to count the days to my flight back home. On the other hand, the lectures took place at a beautiful castle, in which the host university is accommodated.

Another example for the contrasts of Latvia is the differences between the cities Jelgava and Riga. For an assignment we had to complete during the PIM program we travelled to Riga, the capital of Latvia. Riga is the total opposite of Jelgava. Riga is ten times bigger than Jelgava, but that was not what made the cities so different. The “heartbeat” of Riga was so much faster - Riga is living and moving, a feeling I never got in Jelgava. I have to say Riga is one of the most beautiful cities I have ever visited. In conclusion I want to address a very positive side of Jelgava. The local people were really friendly and cooperative which makes the impression I got of Jelgava somewhat brighter.

Course Contents

Personally, I found the contents of the lectures really interesting. The topics were really different from the ones I have to deal with in the regular courses during my studies at the Kiel University of Applied Sciences. For me the topics we learned at PIM were beyond the horizon of the typical Business Administration studies. Furthermore, we had the chance to apply the contents directly in the international groups we were working in during the program.

Additionally, it was very interesting to see how the didactic approaches differ among the professors from the different countries. Every teacher of each nation involved had his or her own method to transfer the contents of teaching. The range was from teacher-centered teaching to group work. It was

interesting to see how the students from different countries reacted to the different methods. It was obvious that in the beginning the students felt most comfortable with the methods that are also used in their home country.

Group Dynamics

PIM was one of the most impressive and formative experiences I have had in the field of group dynamics. These experiences influenced me so much that my initial skeptical attitude and my desire of the PIM program ending as soon as possible were completely reversed. At the end, I felt sorry that the program was already over.

At the beginning a distance between the involved nationalities was obvious. During the recesses between the lectures the groups were standing separated by their nationalities. This behavior, however, changed in a relatively short time. In other words, the intercultural teams formed quickly. After that a building up of trust between the group members was palpable and led to a better connection between the different nations. The activities which were implemented besides the official teaching program also had a great influence in strengthening the relations between the different nations.

One of the closest relationships I established during PIM was with one of my group members, Mikko from Finland. We got along so well that I invited him to the “Kieler Woche” (the ‘Kiel Week’, a world famous sailing event and great folk festival) in Germany. A year after PIM, Mikko and some friends of his visited me in Germany and stayed for a week. We had a lot of fun and enjoyed the time. This shows that at PIM connections that are more than just short-term relationships can be made.

Conclusion

I learned a lot during the two weeks in Latvia. I reckon that most of what I learned and experienced I use subconsciously but there are also moments when I apply the things I learned deliberately. Firstly, PIM changed my way to evaluate new situations, that is, I do not evaluate situations in a rush anymore, but rather try to look further ahead. Secondly, PIM made me realize that Business Administration is more than just finance or marketing - I now understand that different cultures and ways to deal with them are important matters in the globalized world. Most importantly, I learned that attitudes can change fast and in completely opposite directions. I am glad that I had the chance to experience PIM and I would recommend all students to take part in

such study programs because they provide lifelong learning and personal growth.

PIM2009 in Lithuania by Matthias Kumberger

The word “Labas” is Lithuanian and means nothing else but “hello”. It was one of the first Lithuanian words I said - reading it from a travel guide - to a Lithuanian in a public bus in Vilnius. Now surely, there is nothing special about this encounter except that I still remember it because it was the beginning of two incredible weeks.

I first read about PIM on my university’s homepage, wondering whether I should apply. I did not hesitate long and wrote Professor Waldeck, the PIM coordinator of Kiel University of Applied Sciences an application email and eventually got on board. Soon after, the German team met and we started slowly with the preparations. We were curious about what was about to come - How should we get to Lithuania, by ferry, train or plane? Did anyone have ideas for the Meeting Point fair? What information should we submit to the coordinating institution, Laurea University of Applied Sciences? A couple of weeks later we arrived at the Vilnius airport on a warm mid-May afternoon. We spent the last night in Vilnius at a nice small hostel before travelling to Alytus for the official check-in and program start.

The Three Sides of PIM

Thinking about my PIM experience comprises a threefold view on this nice fortnight. You spend time abroad, meet new people (having the “group thing” as we called it), and learn new things in class.

First and foremost PIM was an official study course. Without analyzing each lesson individually I must stress that the lectures brought up new things and helped polish the ones almost forgotten. However, the true “additional value” was created by the role plays and great guest lecturer Richard Gesteland because we were shown how caught up we all were in our cultural and personal “normality”. One cannot change the way one is. Sure we were all students from somewhat similar cultural backgrounds and thus did not get culture-shocked in any way but we learned to deliberate a little more; on culture and personality. Take for example my role play exercise encounter with a fellow student Jesse, who had an argument with me (he was my employee, I was his boss) about job conditions that got us so involved that Kristina Henriksson, the lecturer supervising the exercise could hardly get us

back to class. PIM definitely was an Intensive Program, as the organizing team always underlined! In addition to the lectures the two other views were important parts of the deal as well.

I had not been to the Baltic States before. Endless woods and pastures on our way, then arrival in Alytus: A nice but truly provincial town. Young men from Alytus College tend to never leave the parking lot without doing some wheel spinning. Alytus is cut through by the river Nemunas. Coming from Belarus it seems to be like Europe's natural eastern border and - with its German name being mentioned in a former part of the German anthem - a direct link to history, thus letting you reflect on how lucky we are today with so little turmoil. In general, history can be experienced everywhere in Lithuania. During PIM we did three excursions: To Kaunas, the Trakai Castle and of course the capital city, Vilnius.

Kaunas, west of Vilnius, is a regional capital and the second largest city after Vilnius. It has a long, broad shopping street with an alley and trolley busses rushing by. On the kind-of-peninsula between the joining rivers Nemunas and Neris one finds the beautiful historic centre of Kaunas. Trakai is home to a true attraction: the castle of Trakai which is situated on an island. It is surrounded by lakes and forests. About 30 kilometers west of Vilnius you feel sent back into romantic summer time Middle Age surroundings. And then in Vilnius you feel brought back to the 21st century: Passing baroque churches, then being immediately confronted with 20th century socialist buildings you will find your way to hotel "Reval" - five stars and a wonderful sky bar. Vilnius by night can compete with any other capital in Europe.

But what is a PIM participant without all his PIM-co-participants? The congeniality of a school trip could be felt all the time throughout the program. Everyone had stories to tell. The teams competed just to get back to play spin-the-bottle or truth-or-dare in the evening, having a Švyturys. "What has been said in the pool stays in the pool!" (the pool was actually an empty fountain basin). I really enjoyed these evenings with a group that was as heterogeneous as it was a solid team. It would be unfair to just mention some members as I could comment on everyone and love to reminisce on the many nice episodes I experienced with them. However, I must quote one of my fellow PIM participants when we were ordering food. Says Mogens to a waitress ready to serve two "customized" pizzas: "That's for us, the two picky boys with the glasses!" In the end there is little to actually say about our "group thing" since it was less about "facts" but more about having a good time and making new friends.

Conclusion

After two weeks we were on our way back from Alytus to Vilnius. The bus passed Lepelionių piliakalnis (Lepelionys mound) also known as “Napoleon’s hat”- yet another opportunity to witness something historical though you seemed to be in the middle of nowhere far away from home. The last day in Vilnius before travelling home followed.

To put a long story short: PIM2009 was more than worth trying. Lithuania was a gain - beautiful, exciting and also still reminiscent of former eras. And such a nice trip really became socially embedded in the great PIM2009 crew. What a combination.

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Like Six Peas in a Pod or Just Bad Apples? Intercultural Teamwork in PIM2009

Sanna Berlanga

Since intercultural communication is an essential part of the intensive program “Promoting Intercultural Management for Working Life in the Baltic Sea Region” (PIM) it became topical to consider the effects different cultures have on teamwork in it. In PIM2009 participants from six different countries gathered together to study in intercultural teams for a two-week period. The goal was to observe the participants of PIM 2009 and reflect how they acted and reacted with other cultures and how all this may have affected their teamwork. The focus is on the representatives of PIM2009 and the results are only one person’s opinions meaning that they may not be accurate for other teams or other PIM programs. The results could be used to introduce the importance of interculturalism and its benefits.

Cultural Differences in Working Life

People learn how to behave and act from the society and cultures they are born into. Culture is therefore something that makes a group of people unique by sharing similar experiences and attitudes. Usually the most obvious characteristics in human behaviour are individual personalities but this is all formed on top of the experiences and heritage of one’s own culture. People might expect business to be done in a similar way everywhere, though, but differences between working cultures may be enormous and cause misunderstandings, problems or even conflicts (Bartlett and Davidsson (2003, 15) E. Jandt (2007, 25) Hofstede (2001, 2–3).

There were students from six countries participating in PIM2009. For the success of PIM it is relevant to concentrate only on the working cultures of each country. Working culture in this case will also include studying culture, as the students in PIM were studying and working together in teams. All countries will be presented through stereotypes which may create problems between individuals and are also a good starting point for getting to know a certain

culture (R. R. Gesteland, personal communication 12.5.2009). (Bartlett & Davidsson 2003, 38, Hofstede 2001, 2).

Western Individualists - Denmark, Finland, and Germany

Denmark, Finland, and Germany all have the main characteristics of the northern way of doing business, along with some national adaptations. They appreciate well-organized meetings as well as punctuality and schedules although for the Danish small-talk is more important both before the meeting and to fill in the silent moments. All of these nations have some business rituals, such as firm hand-shakes, strict own personal space, and considering it rude to interrupt a person talking. Hierarchy is not visible in Denmark or Finland and it is common to use first names in working life whereas in Germany using titles and showing respect is vital. Denmark is the most laid-back of these three, being at the more relaxed end of the scale and Germany at the most strict one. All northern Europeans tend to be more reserved than others but the Danes make an exception in this, too; they are often more open whilst the Finns and the Germans avoid showing emotions and require more time to get closer to others. (Gesteland 2002, 289–291, 308–310, 312–315.)

In the PIM2009 student teams all Danes were talkative, relaxed and polite and disliked hierarchy therefore fitting well into the stereotype. They were also expected to be open and tolerant, for instance, when it comes to other people's language skills or different teaching methods. Finns and Germans fit their stereotypes even better than the Danish; The Finnish were talkative and showed emotions in their national group but got more silent and reserved outside of it. Also Germans behaved as predicted: formality, hierarchy and written word were appreciated, some needed a schedule even for their leisure time and a blunt "No!" was not a rare thing to hear from the Germans. This was not meant to be rude, though, rather it was just a way of letting others know their opinions. Germans were the most similar to their stereotype compared with the other nationalities in PIM2009 whereas other cultures had more exceptions to the theory. It can easily be said that all of the participating German students were punctual, polite, and well-organized. (Gesteland 2002, 289–291, 308–310, 312–315)

Eastern Hierarchies - Estonia, Lithuania, and Poland

These three countries are related to each other through their similar history and heritage from the Soviet Union times: they are more formal and relationships play a more important role in working life than in Finland, Germany, and Denmark. In Estonia, Lithuania, and Poland business is a highly appreciated matter where schedules are respected with some exceptions and relationships are important as well as formality, hierarchy, and business rituals. For the Polish it is important to build up relationships but they are also verbally direct, sometimes at the cost of not being polite. Formality is appreciated while punctuality may vary significantly. The Baltic countries are more or less similar to Poland with the exception that the Estonians behave in a similar way to the Scandinavians whereas in the south the Lithuanians behave more like the southern Europeans. This leads to the fact that the Estonians are relatively individualistic and deal-focused in working life respecting schedules and formality and the Lithuanians are more expressing and outgoing allowing more physical contact. (Gesteland 2002, 271-275, 233-236.)

In the PIM2009 student teams all of the Estonians matched the profile of a regular Estonian quite well and the few differences were mostly about expressiveness: they were among the most talkative students and no heritage from the Soviet Union times could be seen. In the Polish group there were some significant differences between the students but all in all the Polish students represented more or less the theory by respecting traditions and schedules as well as politeness but differed from it by being more open and talkative and having less respect towards formality. On the other hand, the Lithuanians reflected old Soviet time values more, such as hierarchy and shyness. They did not seem to be very open towards other cultures and no obvious southern European features were seen. One fact affecting this behaviour was that some of them were locals, studying at their own university without having the experience of a new and exciting environment or a connection to others through the shared accommodation. (Gesteland 2002, 271-275, 233-236.)

Or Just One Big Happy Family?

All the participating countries in PIM2009 can be considered to be quite similar due to their close proximity, joint history and, for instance, memberships in the European Union. One interesting factor in PIM2009 that actually underlined

the similarity of these cultures was the fact that one participant in the Finnish group was actually a Spanish exchange student. She was not meant to be evaluated for this research but offered an interesting fact about the similarities of the other six countries. Compared to Spanish culture, the nations around the Baltic Sea share a lot of similar characteristics mostly punctuality, formality, and paying less attention to relationships in business. (Gesteland, personal communication 12.5.2009)

Teamwork Between Cultures

Three important features to consider for this research are interculturalism, teams, and communication between cultures. When compared to the other key words “intercultural” is the one which includes actual interaction between cultures. A team is a group of people who has come together for some special reason or purpose, in this case to study in PIM2009. In a team every member recognizes that he or she is a part of the team and is willing to work together to reach the common goal. Intercultural communication occurs every time a person sends a message to another person from a different culture. Since culture and communication are strongly connected, these two persons most likely have a different perception on behaviour and communication styles, which will alter both the message and the way to receive it. (Hofstede 2001, 2; Jandt 2007, 47–48; Samovar & Porter 2001, 46, 196.) Levi 2007, 4–5; Fries 2002, 6, PDF-document)

Every team considered in this article was intercultural and they had to work together for a shared goal. In PIM2009 there were two different kinds of teams to be found: In the big 38-person student team there were altogether six cultural backgrounds and in the eight smaller teams varying from four to five cultures when the big one was divided for efficient teamwork. This amount of people in one group is said to be ideal for teamwork since everyone has to participate and is able to get to know several different working cultures. (Pennington 2002, 78)

Reasons to Use Intercultural Teams

Even though teams are sometimes used in situations where it is not the best way to get things done, for an intensive program like PIM teamwork is the best option to provide the best learning environment for students. They will experience different ways of working as well as communicating and cooperating with foreign cultures. A team is a good choice when students have

to find solutions to some possible problems and have an actual outcome, that is, the final presentation as a result of their teamwork (Levi 2007, 276-277; Gore 2007, 106).

There are some obstacles to be overcome first to be able to get positive results from intercultural teamwork. Attitudes and communication are usually the biggest ones of them. Stereotypes, as the ones discussed previously, and prejudice towards foreign cultures are connected with a whole nation setting aside personal characteristics. One's attitudes might be difficult to change which makes it challenging to build up team spirit. Prejudice was not expected to occur in PIM2009, since all students who apply to the program know about the interculturalism it requires. Everyone has formed some kind of stereotypes about other cultures either through personal or other people's experiences but every student should be ready to get rid of them after getting to know the other students. The one stereotype, which was not changed though, was the one about German punctuality and strictness, which was somewhat obvious in the big student team. (Levi 2007, 219-220, 224, 274; Hofstede 2001, 424; Gore 2007, 104)

Communication problems are usually misunderstandings derived from different ways of expressing one's opinions and using a foreign language. In PIM2009 this meant that it took more time to complete the tasks in English which also might have led into poor communication because of a lack of sufficient vocabulary. In the small student teams, communication in general seemed to vary quite a lot. For some students there seemed to be problems with communicating in English which caused frustration and in some cases led to using other languages. On one hand, the latter helped to get the task done but, on the other, made the teaming more difficult by making others feel like outsiders. Native languages were used mostly during leisure time in the national groups, though, but still divided the big student group to a certain extent. (Hofstede 2001, 2; Jandt 2007, 47-48; Samovar & Porter 2001, 22, 46, 196.)

Problems may also occur due to the differences in ways of giving feedback and making compromises. Some cultures may value direct communication with cold facts more than others who interpret this as rude and aggressive. This may also increase the stress levels in the team. In PIM2009 all the representations of the participants' cultural backgrounds were somewhat similar in the ways of communicating and big conflicts were avoided. When dealing with northern cultures it seems that less feedback was more common than too much of it and compromises were desired. (Levi 2007, 128-129, 252-253; Gore 2007, 104; Levi 2007, 219).

Even though in a monocultural team members usually have somewhat similar values, beliefs and working habits and are more likely to understand each other with less effort, an intercultural team has many benefits such as personal growth and advanced creativity. Forming team spirit and finally implementing the task might be more difficult but in an intercultural team people usually see things in multiple ways and therefore sharing opinions, ideas, and different experiences is more rewarding. Backgrounds may vary quite a lot which brings out more perspectives, interpretations, and alternatives. This is why intercultural teamwork is thought to improve the effectiveness of teams and keep them competitive despite the possible challenges caused by cultural diversity. Learning in an intercultural team in PIM is essential since the students have to figure out a way to cooperate with foreign cultures, through which they gain the best possible development for their own social and professional competence. (Levi 2007, 219; Hofstede 2001, 2; Helker 2008)

In about half of the teams communication developed well and the members built a strong friendship between each other. It was obvious that for these teams teamwork was more fun and they succeeded better in their assignments.

Teaming

Teaming means all the phases a team goes through when it starts working together. During PIM2009 the students had only two weeks to work in their team without meeting each other beforehand. They started working together immediately on the first day in Lithuania and to ascertain the productivity and success of the team they tried to figure out the structure of the team, common ways of working, and its rules and norms as soon as possible. (Helker 2008; Pennington 2002, 70.)

In PIM2009 especially forming had to be done fast which is usually a difficult phase in intercultural teams; people tend to have limited trust in others if they come from different cultural backgrounds. In PIM2009 during the first few days almost everyone preferred to spend time in the national groups, for example while eating and during leisure time. This was probably because even the students from the same country did not know each other that well either and it was easier to get to know the compatriots first. To make the forming phase easier everyone took different kinds of tests to define what their role in the team would be. When the roles are defined the storming phase follows and

it usually includes some conflicts between the members. This was true also in PIM2009, mostly due to cultural differences, stress, and language barrier. The most obvious conflicts were between cultures which are not considered similar, such as German and Estonian, German and Lithuanian as well as Danish and Lithuanian. (Helker 2008.)

However, the teams got to the next stage quite fast and norming was gone through without any problems. Norming is the phase in which the conflicts are overcome and teamwork finds its paths, trust is built, and members start to appreciate one another's differences. The next phase is performing and by the time the PIM2009 teams were in this stage some differences occurred. Some teams succeeded in tasks and building up harmony whereas others did not quite achieve this as well as they could have, most probably because of the final task and the stress it caused them. There was some dissatisfaction in the air during the last days and some teams stopped their development after storming and completed tasks but did not create a strong bond. (Helker 2008.)

Still, on the last day in Lithuania sadness and tears were definitely a part of PIM2009, which symbolized the connection in the big 38-student team, not in the small ones. Everyone was already glad to be able to go home and face other challenges as it should be in the adjourning stage, but at the same time would not have wanted to leave their friends behind. The fast bonding inside the big student team was a consequence of spending two weeks intensively together without having the pressure from reaching a set goal.

Cohesion and Role Division

Team cohesion means the feeling of a connection between team members. This reduces stress and gets the members to be more supportive towards each other. A strong connection between members is especially important in small teams, such as the student teams in PIM2009. To force this connection on the day of arrival the students had to work as a team almost immediately in different kinds of cohesion-building activities and outdoor games. The students had to get close to their team members and they improved their team communication without even noticing it. Playful exercises brought out the innovativeness in student teams; the small teams had to create a play using pictures they had collected during the games. This not only brought together every small student team but also the big 38-student team by laughing and having fun. (Gore 2007, 101; Levi 62, 298.)

In small student teams, cohesion varied quite significantly and it was obvious that some teams were tighter than others. In the beginning it was actually a challenge for some teams to spend time together outside teamwork, for instance to have dinner with their fellow members from the small student team. On the other hand, cohesion in the big 38-student team was clearly strong and the spirit of PIM glued all students together surprisingly quickly.

In order to build up cohesion between members, a team has to be able to divide roles and tasks successfully. Roles describe what people are supposed to do in a team and how all these roles work together. In PIM2009 the roles usually derived from people's own personalities. Since in PIM there is not that much time before the team has to start working together intensively the role division was made faster by organizing personality tests for the students. (Levi 2007, 64.)

Attitudes, Adaptation, and Motivation

In general, confronting foreign cultures make people feel insecure because it may feel distant and different. Stereotypes about one nation can be positive and help the team to get to know each other faster but on the other hand negative stereotypes may have a serious effect on intercultural teamwork and attitudes. Which path a team is going to take depends on the team members' attitudes towards teamwork itself and foreign cultures. (Gore 2007, 149; Levi 2007, 20, 220, 224; Bartlett and Davidsson 2003, 135, 137)

On average the students in PIM2009 seemed to be tolerant and willing to get to know one another. The openness and tolerance were obvious during the lessons when cultural differences were discussed but in practice the behavior of some of the students was quite the opposite. There was actually more intolerance in PIM2009 than what could have been expected according to the selection of students and their young age. The students themselves did not even regard some small things as intolerance, such as bad attitude towards food and locals and in fact these problems did become fewer when time went by. Some students, who first appeared to be tolerant in the class but were not in reality, learned to realize the connection between the lessons and their own behaviour and actually gained the most from PIM2009.

The students themselves recognized more stereotypes in the big student team than in the smaller ones because there was more than one representative from one country present. The few stereotypes the students found were mostly considered to be positive and formed very quickly according to what they had

heard before. For instance, some stereotypes about the Spanish were based on hear-say and the behavior of only one person. After the Spanish participant in PIM2009 had been late from just one lecture, all other students were joking about how the stereotype of the Spanish always being late is true. Another example of this is how a German and a Dane made conclusions about Lithuanians too fast; The town in which PIM2009 was organized was rather small and people were not used to foreigners which is why some students built negative stereotypes about Lithuanians. After a visit to the capital city Vilnius they realised how hastily they had been judging the locals and how fast it happened after just one week in a foreign country.

Getting to know a foreign culture's behaviour, values and habits is a way of adapting to it which is crucial in intercultural teamwork. Adapting does not mean accepting all the habits in the foreign culture, but rather understanding these differences and perhaps coming halfway with one's own attitudes. It took some time but after the students had spent time in their teams they saw cultural differences in a new light, started to adjust, and got more motivated. (Gore 2007, 150.)

Motivation creates team spirit and gets people to work harder for the team. The tasks and especially social relations in the team have to be satisfying to make the members feel comfortable and cooperative. One example on the good attitude in the big 38-student team was the joint slogans and sayings the students had. They all shared a strong PIM spirit and really took the PIM2009 mascot whale as their own. Students taught phrases in their own languages to each other, one of them being "I love the PIM whale". All participants together were called the PIM family already from the start and this PIM spirit was very important for the success of the intensive program. (Levi 2007, 21, 58-59.)

Competition, Conflicts, and Maintaining Social Relations

In an intercultural team the risk of competition and conflicts may be more significant than in monocultural teams due to the differences in importance of power. This is why it is important to choose equal members to the team and not to divide tasks according to nationalities to get all of them to participate equally. Competition in PIM2009 could have appeared inside the team or between the small teams but there was no actual competition to be seen between them. It seemed like the teams were competing just to get the tasks done well, not to beat the others. Inside the teams there were some persons

who needed to have more power than the others but this ended up being more of a personal than cultural difference. (Levi 2007, 75, 234–235.) (Gore 2007, 109; Levi 2007, 75.)

Especially during the learning process conflicts cannot be avoided in teamwork. They may destroy social relations as well as weaken communication, thus drawing attention from tasks and goals. Nevertheless, there are also benefits to conflicts and the members themselves have the choice on how to handle possible problems. Any kind of challenge is often a good test for the cohesion of the team and solving problems together makes the team get more connected and better-prepared for later conflicts. (Levi 2007, 111; Bartlett and Davidsson 2003, 137)

Maintaining social relations is an important feature for evaluating a team since it affects the motivation of all the members. Even if conflicts occur, an emotionally related and interactive team is able to solve problems and learn from them. In PIM2009 all students considered it to be important to maintain social relationships and had good social skills to solve the occurring problems. Conflicts in the big student team were not significant since the students did not have to complete tasks in this team but in the smaller ones the situation was different. Stress, deadlines, and especially the final assignment seemed to cause conflicts which had to be solved right away to be able to continue proper teamwork. (Bartlett & Davidsson 2003, 137; Levi 2007, 21.)

Knowledge Creation and Personal Benefits

Knowledge creation is the main reason for intercultural teamwork, also in PIM2009. New information is created when people from a variety of backgrounds work together. In an intercultural team one learns not only about foreign cultures but also about his own native culture. When each person shares knowledge with his or her fellow members this information gets altered and enables far more creative ideas than in a monocultural team. (Gore 2007, 142–143.)

Knowledge creation and especially the personal benefits the students gain during the project are crucial in PIM. Teamwork should help an individual's social skills and in PIM also intercultural competence which applies to personal as well as professional growth. Students create new knowledge themselves by spending time together, learning not only at the lessons but also during leisure time. In PIM2009 many of them said they had to let go of the stereotypes they

had had before and that they learned how to act with different cultures - learned by doing and experiencing by themselves. (Levi 2007, 22).

After the intensive two weeks in Lithuania it was clear that the behaviour and attitudes of the students had changed. The students attended PIM2009 to get to learn about interculturalism and tolerance and most of them said they felt like their learning process had just started in PIM and would continue later thanks to new motivation.

Personal Characteristics

All variation from the cultural stereotypes in PIM2009 can be explained through personal characteristics. The biggest differences with the theory were caused by the student selections which slightly distorted the evaluation of cultures in PIM2009. On one hand, some of the participating students were not quite prepared to study in an intercultural environment with just a few participants from their home culture and, on the other, some of them had already spent their exchange semester abroad and therefore were too experienced in dealing with foreign cultures expecting the studies to move on at a faster pace. All students in PIM should be motivated to work in teams with different nationalities but should not have too much experience in interculturalism in order to be able to get the most benefits from the intensive program.

In PIM2009, the students themselves considered personal characteristics to have been more visible than stereotypes and already after one week of teamwork they only agreed on the stereotype of the Germans to be true. The cultural features affected every student's behaviour although it is true that even with shared characteristics of one nation there are no two similar persons in any culture. (R. R. Gesteland, personal communication 12.5.2009.)

Conclusion

Even though there are cultural differences between these six countries, the Baltic Sea itself is not the only thing binding them together. Estonia, Finland, Denmark, Germany, Poland, and Lithuania are all more or less northern European cultures significantly influenced by the western culture and they have the same kind of calm, polite, and somewhat reserved behaviour. Differences tend to grow bigger the further away the countries are from each

other. The few differences seem to be found in the importance of formality and close relationships in business.

All in all the cultural features in PIM2009 were clear. Even in spite of a small sample of all nationalities and the effect of personal characteristics, it was obvious that especially cultural differences affected the PIM2009 teamwork. When it comes to the stereotypes the best matches in the comparison with the theory were the Estonians, Germans, and Finns.

All in all, PIM2009 showed how even the most delicate cultural features can affect the teamwork of persons coming from countries with a very close proximity. Therefore, cultural differences should never be ignored. It was also proven that teamwork has its challenges but can at its best be very effective and bring benefits to both the organization and individuals. In most of the student teams this came true when friendships were created and new aspects about intercultural work for future professional life were achieved. All these were personal benefits but at the same time benefits for the organization, too; PIM is implemented to teach students, improve their personal and professional competences, and to improve collaboration around the Baltic Sea.

Sanna Berlanga

Sanna Berlanga participated in PIM2009 as an organizing team member and did her Bachelor's thesis "Cultural Chameleons and Teamwork Terminators – Promoting Intercultural Management in the Baltic Sea Region PIM 2009 as Intercultural Teamwork" as a study on group dynamics and teamwork within the participating students. Today Sanna has completed her Bachelor's degree studies in Tourism. After graduating, Sanna spent some time in León, Mexico where she worked as an English teacher and Supervisor at a private language school.

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Intercultural Conflict Management in PIM

Britta Thege

Introduction

Today the rapid growth of global business brings together people from different cultural backgrounds and the role of culture in international business has been more and more recognized. Multinational companies create culturally diverse groups respectively multinational teams to meet their organizational goals. Yet, differences among team members are fertile ground for conflicts (cf. Joshi, Labianca & Caligiuri, 2002) and international co-operation calls on us to be knowledgeable about intercultural communication as well as being capable of understanding and managing the dynamics of intercultural conflict.

“Intercultural conflict is ... the experience of emotional frustration in conjunction with perceived incompatibility of values, norms, face orientations, goals, scarce resources, processes, and/or outcomes between a minimum of two parties from two or more different cultural communities in an interactive situation” (Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2001, 17).

While everyday intercultural conflicts are often based on cultural ignorance or misunderstanding or are simply caused by culturally driven miscommunication and misinterpretation, others are rooted in long-standing historical grievances. In other words, culture as a commonly shared system of attitudes, beliefs and behaviors, provides “the lens by which we view and bring into focus our world; the logic (known as common sense) by which we order it; the grammar by which it makes sense” (Avruch & Black, 1993, 133). In order to manage intercultural conflict constructively, we *must* take other people’s cultural perspectives and personality factors into consideration. It is culture that shapes the individual’s perception of conflict and how the individual will respond to it. Conflict involves intercultural perceptions and these perceptions are filtered through our lenses of ethnocentrism and stereotypes.

This article firstly deals with some key issues of intercultural conflict in work group situations caused by culture standards, secondly looks at different

conflict management styles in relation to the cultural dimensions of individualism and collectivism as proposed by Hofstede (2001) and finally glances at some guidelines how to manage conflict constructively along these two dimensions according to Ting-Toomey and Oetzel (2001). Furthermore, it highlights some of the learning experiences that the students of the PIM intensive program have had in the lectures on intercultural conflict management.

Conflict in Heterogeneous Work Groups and Teams

People in organisations are working in team situations on a daily basis and conflict is inevitable in any group. Group composition, for instance, plays a key role for conflict in terms of its size and proportional representation (for example gender, age, ethnicity etc.). Problems linked to group work generally refer to efficiency, group dynamic processes and diversity within groups. Cross-cultural research, however, provides specific insights on the effects of special cultural traits on the process and performance of task-related group work. Cox (1994 cited in Ting-Toomey & Oetzel 2001) identified five critical sources of conflict in a culturally diverse group, namely cultural difference, ethnic identity maintenance, power imbalance, competing conflict goals and competition for scarce resources.

In an experimental study Thomas (1999) explored the influence of cultural diversity on group work effectiveness hypothesizing that culturally heterogeneous groups are more likely to suffer from increased process losses and have lower group performance, specifically on complex tasks, than homogenous groups - which means that cultural diversity within groups is clearly related to group performance. According to Thomas (ibid) there are higher process-related losses in heterogeneous groups which form essential obstacles for the success of heterogeneous teams. They relate to:

- communication problems
- different assumptions on team work
- diverging opinions of solution findings and
- decision-making.

“The relationship of an individual to his or her in-group is a key element in understanding the effects of culture on the functioning of groups. In addition, the individualism/

collectivism dimension reflects the differential emphasis placed by group members on autonomy of behaviour versus group action. ... That is, sociocultural beliefs and norms will influence what patterns of behaviour and what group and individual outcomes are thought to be desirable and, therefore, produce differing assessments of group processes and outcomes by culturally different group members” (ibid, 246).

Norms of behavior can be different across societies even if the underlying values are the same and can cause critical incidents to emerge. The underlying norms of thinking, perceiving, judging, and acting that the majority of individuals in a given culture consider as normal are known as *culture standards*. In a working environment these cultural standards comprise, for instance, issues such as communication style, time management, concept of space, group orientation and procedural style. These culture standards may reinforce conflicts in co-operations and team work situations.

Dunkel (2004) explored - by referring to Tuckman and Jensen’s (1977) phase-model of team development¹ - the impact of different culture standards on the processes and performances of Austrian, Spanish, German and Hungarian task groups. A couple of culture standards were identified in the study which have an important impact on teamwork, because they increase conflicts in team development processes. A high amount of critical incidents that were cited by the participants in the study was about teamwork and structure of meetings. Violations of cultural expectations had consequences, especially when the teams or groups were in formative stages.

PIM Experiences

From the start of the PIM study program each student was assigned to one intercultural team. It is part of the program concept that the teams might experience high pressure, particularly time pressure, to perform their group project successfully. Owing to diverse culture standards in terms of time management, communication style, or group orientation the team members may feel increased tension, competition, and conflict within the group.

Therefore, a learning exercise in the module on “Intercultural Conflict Management” was to explore and compare one’s own national culture standards with other nationalities in order to explore similarities and differences. At first, the students formed national groups and discussed - with the help of a checklist - the following questions:

- How direct is my communication style?
- How strict is my time management?
- What type of group orientation do I comply with?

In addition, the national groups collected do's and don'ts of their culture: What is desirable/appropriate respectively impolite/inappropriate/offending to do or to say (for example greeting rituals, form of address, conversation topics, table manners, etc.)? Finally all students came together in plenum to report and compare their results. This exchange elucidated national culture standards. It also helped the students to understand whether an emerging conflict in an international team is more owing to cultural or personality factors. However, the chosen style to manage conflict is related to culture as well as personality (cf. Kaushal & Kwantes, 2006).

Conflict styles

Research investigating the influence of culture on conflict management found that the individualistic and collectivistic dimension indeed influence a person's style of conflict resolution behavior. Originally, Blake and Mouton (1964) distinguished five conflict interaction styles for managing interpersonal conflict which were renamed by Thomas (1976) in the following way:

- the *dominating (or competitive) style* emphasising conflict tactics that push for one's own position or goal above and beyond the other person's conflict interest;
- the *avoiding style* involving eluding the conflict topic, the conflict party, or the conflict situation altogether;
- the *accommodating style* being characterised by a high concern for the other person's conflict interest above and beyond one's own conflict interest;
- the *compromising style* involving a give-and-take concession approach to reach a midpoint agreement concerning the conflict issue;
- the *collaborative (or integrative) style* reflecting a need for solution closure in conflict and involves high concern for self and high concern for others in conflict negotiation.

Furthermore, these popular conflict management styles are each governed by an individual's concern for self (assertiveness) or concern for others

(cooperativeness) (Thomas, 1976; Rahim & Bonoma, 1979) resulting in the following grid (cf. Kilman & Thomas, 1975; Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2001, 47):

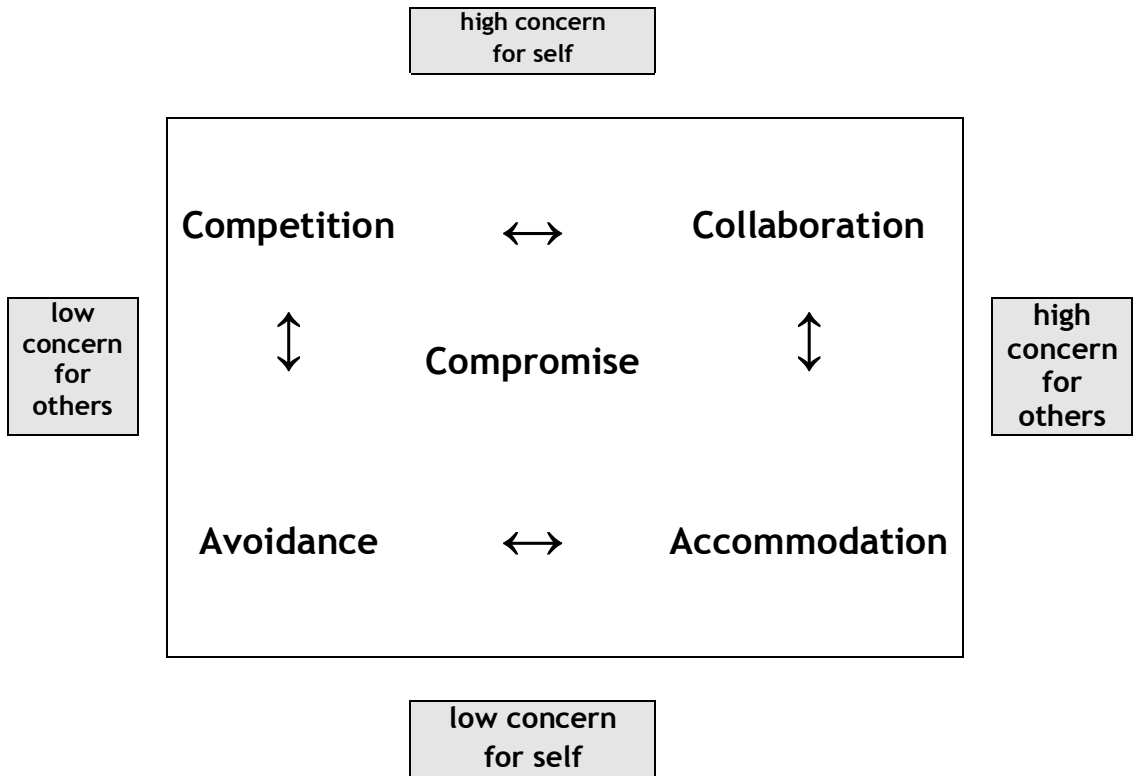


Figure 1. Conflict styles related to self and other²

However, the cultural value dimensions we hold influence

- whether we tend to approach or avoid conflict
- the way we attribute meanings to conflict events
- the way we communicate in specific conflict episodes

and explain to quite some extent why members of different or even contrasting cultures - particularly East Asian and western cultures - approach conflict differently. Collectivistic cultures, for instance, prioritise harmony in order to avoid direct disputes, confrontations and rejections and emphasise a good relationship with business partners or colleagues (cf. Holt & DeVore,

2005). In this context Ting-Toomey (1988) indicates that avoidance and accommodation are seen as appropriate interaction styles in Asian countries because they maintain harmony. The key factors of competent intercultural conflict management are knowledge concerning diverse conflict styles and facework issues (Ting-Toomey, 1998). In her view it is not the frequency of conflict that determines whether we have a satisfying or dissatisfying relationship but rather the competencies that we apply in managing our conflicts that will move the relationship along a constructive or destructive path (Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2001, 3).

Intercultural Conflict Management

Stella Ting-Toomey is perhaps one of the best known academics in the field of intercultural conflict management. She developed the theory of *face negotiation* that deals with how people from different cultures respond when placed in conflict.³ Whereas individualists are concerned with conflict problem-solution closure, collectivists are concerned with in-group/ out-group face dynamic issues. Overall, the individualistic, outcome-oriented model promotes the criterion of effectiveness over that of appropriateness. Conversely, the collectivistic, process-oriented model emphasizes the criterion of appropriate-ness (face work) over that of effectiveness.

Individualists tend to operate from the *outcome-oriented model*, which emphasises the following conflict assumptions:

- Conflict is perceived as closely related to the outcomes that are salient to the respective individual conflict parties in a given conflict situation.
- Communication in the conflict process is viewed as dissatisfying when the conflict parties are not willing to deal with the conflict openly and honestly.
- Conversely, communication in the conflict process is viewed as satisfying when the conflict parties are willing to confront the issues openly and disclose their feelings directly in a levelling manner.
- The conflict outcome is perceived as unproductive when no tangible goals are reached or no plan of action is developed. The conflict outcome is perceived as productive when tangible solutions are reached and an action plan is drawn.

- Effective and appropriate management of conflict means that individual goals are addressed and differences are being dealt with openly and fairly in the situational context (ibid, 174-175).

Collectivists tend to follow the conflict assumptions of a *process-oriented model*:

- Conflict is weighed against the face-threat incurred in the conflict negotiation process; it is also being interpreted in the web of in-group/out-group relationships.
- Communication in the conflict process is perceived as threatening when the parties push for substantive issue discussion before proper face-work management.
- Communication in the conflict interaction is viewed as satisfying when the parties engage in mutual face-giving behaviour and attend to both conflict verbal messages and nonverbal nuances.
- The conflict process or outcome is perceived as unproductive when face issues are not addressed adequately and relational/in-group feelings are not attended to sensitively.
- The conflict process or outcome is defined as productive when both conflict parties can claim win-win results on the face-work front in addition to substantive agreement.
- Appropriate and effective management of conflict means that the mutual faces of the conflict parties are saved or even upgraded in the interaction and they have dealt with the conflict episode adaptively in conjunction with substantive gains or losses (ibid, 175-176).

The key in any constructive (intercultural) conflict management is to demonstrate respect for one another and to be flexible and adaptable and not be locked into one set of behavioural or thinking patterns (ibid, 194). Communication adaptability is one of the key skills to constructive intercultural conflict negotiation in managing both culture-based and individual-based differences. Constructive intercultural conflict management requires

- communicating effectively and appropriately in different intercultural situations, which necessitates adaptation
- being knowledgeable and respectful of different worldviews and multiple approaches to dealing with a conflict situation
- being sensitive to the differences and similarities between individualistic and collectivistic cultures
- being aware of our own ethnocentric biases and cultural-based attributions when making snapshot evaluations of other person's conflict management approaches (ibid, 195).

PIM Students' Learning Experiences

According to these guidelines the PIM students were trained with a role play to consider the conflict partners' perspectives mindfully, in particular being aware of the other persons' culture-specific value orientations and cultural identity tendencies and what their preferred conflict resolution styles are, in order to avoid intercultural misunderstandings that fuel conflict in their teams. This learning experience, however, equipped them with skills addressing conflict appropriately if working in international multi-cultural business environments.

¹ Tuckman and Jensen (1977) distinguish five phases: forming, storming, norming, performing, adjourning.

² The dominating/competing style implies low concern for others and high concern for self; the avoiding style implies low concern for others and low concern for self; the accommodating style implies high concern for others and low concern for self; the compromising style implies moderate concern for others and moderate concern for self; the collaborative/integrative style implies high concern for others and high concern for self.

³ Face-work is defined as clusters of communicative behaviors that are used to enact self-face and to uphold, challenge/threaten, or support the other person's face. ... Face is associated with respect, honor, status, reputation, credibility, competence, family/network connection, loyalty, trust, relational indebtedness and obligation issues" (Ting-Toomey & Kurogi, 1998, 190). Face is an important self-concept in China, Japan, Korea, Colombia, Mexico and many Arab countries (cf. Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2001, 36).

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PIM Picture Gallery



The founders at the Meeting Point fair in Bydgoszcz



Locals and Estonian students at the Meeting Point fair in Eckernförde



German exactitude at Meeting Point Alytus



The PIM2007 group in an Eckernförde newspaper



Teambuilding in Jelgava



Intense teaching in Tallinn



The PIM logos 2008-2010



Focused students in Tallinn

II Intercultural Management in Education and Working Life

Intercultural Management in the Baltic Sea Region

Richard R. Gesteland

My 30-year career as an intercultural manager included numerous contacts with the countries of the Baltic Sea region. After founding the Global Management consultancy in 1993 I now help business people of one country interact successfully with their counterparts in another country. These days much of our consulting and training takes place in this part of Europe.

Visitors to the Baltic Sea region encounter both similarities and differences in business and management behavior. This article focuses on the differences because it is the differences that cause problems.

Moving east to west along the southern rim of the Baltic Sea one sees management cultures gradually changing from relationship-focused to deal-focused, high-context to low-context, hierarchical to egalitarian, and polychronic to monochronic. Meanwhile, to the north and west all four Nordic countries are deal-focused, low-context, extremely egalitarian and monochronic. These technical terms will become clearer as we discuss a number of cases.

Because the PIM2010 program took place in Bydgoszcz, let us begin with Poland.

Negotiating in Pre-1989 Poland

During the post-World War II war years until 1989 Polish business behavior was representative of a centralized, state-directed economy, which is illustrated by the following incident from the late 1960s:

In 1967 three officials from a large state-owned Polish bicycle factory called on the Sears Roebuck buying office in Vienna. From their market research the Poles knew that Sears was then America's biggest department store chain as well as that country's largest retailer of bicycles.

The Poles had also learned that Sears imported tens of thousands of bikes from an Austrian manufacturer. Based on this information, the Poles came to Sears' Vienna office to offer their bicycles for export to the USA.

My boss, the buying office manager, agreed to meet with the Polish export marketers. After assembling the sample bike they had brought we examined it carefully. The design and finish clearly left a great deal to be desired. It was also too heavy and too crudely made for U.S. consumers, who preferred lightweight, sportier multi-speed models. We therefore politely declined their offer of \$30.00 per bike FOB Hamburg.

The next day the three salesmen returned. Ignoring our comments on design and quality, they submitted a new offer of \$25.00 each. When we rejected this offer, reminding them that their product was simply not saleable in the U.S., they further reduced the price to \$22.00.

When my boss shook his head, the leader of the Polish delegation leaned across the conference table and looked him straight in the eye. "Look, here's the thing. The Plan calls for \$600,000 in hard currency for retooling and modernizing our factory. Now, how many bicycles do you want for six hundred thousand dollars? Just tell us how many you want."

* * * * *

Needless to say, Sears bought none of those bicycles. Now, some forty years later, Polish business behavior is market-driven and customer-focused and not very different from that of Western Europe and North America. Business cultures change and evolve.

The next case refers to Russia in the 1990s.

Evaluating Potential Suppliers in the Baltic Sea Region

Jerry Wilson, head of global procurement for Midwest Door Inc., was attending a meeting of the U.S. National Association of Purchasing Management. At a roundtable discussion Jerry shared his recent experiences with fellow NAPM members.

"We were looking for a good, low-cost supplier of wood frame parts, so we got leads from some chambers of commerce and from a German company in Dessau we're doing business with. We sent faxes and letters to producers in Jyväskylä, Finland, Umeå in Sweden, and three in Russia - Samara, Pskov and Tver -

asking for preliminary data so we could see which factories were worth a look-see.”

“Well, the manufacturers in Jyväskylä and Umeå answered within a week with enough details for us to plan visits to their facilities. Tver and Samara didn’t respond at all. Pskov replied about 10 days later without any useful information but with an invitation for a factory visit. I decided to add Pskov to the itinerary anyway because the Finns and Swedes were pricier than we had expected.”

“So there I was at the end of my European survey trip in the Pskov factory’s reception room at 8:00 in the morning, as agreed. But it was close to 9:00 before they showed me into the director’s office. The interpreter was OK but that guy Ivan Petrovich was a cold fish - stiff and formal, obviously not interested in doing business. While I was trying hard to get through my checklist of questions about equipment, staffing, exports and so on he kept answering that damned phone. Then people came in and out of the room asking questions and pushing papers at him to sign.”

“Finally I realized this was all a waste of time. So I stuffed the papers in my briefcase and got up to leave. That’s when Petrovich finally showed interest. He asked me to stick around to see production and invited me to dinner that evening. But by that time I’d had enough. I got the interpreter to organize transportation to St. Petersburg for my return flight. It was really too bad, since that Pskov factory been recommended by the German company. And now we still have no supplier in Russia, though our main competitor here brings in lots of product from there.”

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We use this case when training people from Scandinavian, British and North American companies who are new to the Russian market. Jerry didn’t know that Russians, being relationship-focused, often react slowly when approached by strangers. He should have arranged to be introduced by the German company. Wilson also misinterpreted the Russian factory director’s characteristic formal, “stone-faced” greeting as lack of interest.

Finally, the monochronic American failed to understand his Russian counterpart's polychronic behavior: lack of punctuality and frequent interruptions to answer the phone, signing papers and talking to drop-in visitors. In U.S. culture those behaviors would be regarded as rude. Because he hadn't prepared himself to understand the intercultural differences, Jerry missed a chance to find a low-cost supplier of components.

The next case comes involves a visitor to Germany. During a coffee break at a seminar in Kuala Lumpur a Malaysian business woman told me of her experience during her first sales visit to Germany.

Waiting in Frankfurt

Noor is in Europe for a week of important meetings. On Monday she has an appointment in Frankfurt, on Tuesday in Oslo, Wednesday in Copenhagen and so on.

Having arrived late on Sunday, she oversleeps on Monday morning and is going to be late for her 9:00 appointment. To make things worse the taxi driver misunderstands her directions and takes her to an address on Eckenheimer Landstrasse instead of Eschersheimer Landstrasse. So it is 10:45 when the visitor finally arrives at Dr. Jürgen Schmidt's office.

At the reception Noor explains that she still very much wants to meet with Dr. Schmidt, even if it has to be for a shorter time. At that moment an unsmiling Dr. Schmidt enters the reception area carrying a briefcase and greets her formally. "Well, good morning! Are you all right?" he asks, looking at her closely.

The Malaysian apologizes for being late and explains the confusion with the street addresses. "Yes, I can understand how that can happen," Dr. Schmidt replies, glancing at his watch. "Unfortunately however I have to leave right now for our quarterly board meeting, and that will take the rest of the day. But since you came from so far away I'll try to rearrange my Tuesday schedule." After checking his pocket calendar he asks, "Can you come back around 11:00 tomorrow?"

Noor thanks him but explains that she has a meeting in Oslo at that time tomorrow. "But I will be back in Frankfurt late Friday to take my return flight on Saturday afternoon. Could we perhaps get together Saturday morning for an hour or so?"

Dr. Schmidt seems to be somewhat surprised at this suggestion. “That won’t be possible,” he answers. “Sorry it did not work out this time.” Then he shakes hands briskly and hurries out the door, leaving Noor to wonder what just happened.

* * * * *

Coming from a Southeast Asian culture where a warm smile is customary, Noor misinterpreted Dr. Schmidt’s greeting as cold and unwelcoming. Unfamiliar with the German monochronic insistence on punctuality and rigid scheduling, she was surprised that Dr. Schmidt was unable to find time for her. Unlike deal-focused Germans, who usually maintain a clear separation between work and private life, relationship-focused Malaysians often work weekends. So Noor thought her German counterpart was being rude when he refused to meet with her on Saturday.

At the conclusion of our Global Management seminar on doing business in Europe Noor came to say she would do things differently on her next visit. For example, she said, “I will be sure not to be late for a meeting in Germany!”

The next case involves Swedes working with Chinese.

Swedes Managing Chinese Suppliers

A Swedish project manager led a team of engineers from a Stockholm-based mobile-phone manufacturer to China. The Swedes spent several days in Shanghai discussing complex technical specifications with their new component supplier. Each time the Swedish team presented details for a new component, they asked their local counterparts if they understood the presentation.

And each time the Chinese engineers nodded, smiled, and replied that they understood everything.

Every evening as the Swedes dined together at their hotel or outside restaurants they marveled at how well the training was going and at how quickly the local engineers were able to understand the complicated new specifications.

When the Swedes returned to Stockholm, a series of emails from Shanghai revealed the Chinese engineers had in fact not understood major portions of the training session.

The Swedes were puzzled. Why did the Shanghai engineers repeatedly say they understood when in fact they did not?

* * * * *

Along with Germans, the Swedes and their Nordic cousins are among the world's most low-context communicators. That means they usually say what they mean and mean what they say and they expect others to do the same.

Chinese on the other hand tend to be high-context communicators. For example, when I did seminars in China until recently no participant ever asked me a question. Until the tea break, that is. Then participants would approach me singly to ask their questions in private. Their culture taught them that asking a question in public is to risk looking stupid and hence losing face. Asking a question could also cause the lecturer to lose face because he had not explained things adequately. For that reason I always planned for frequent breaks in China.

What should the Swedish engineers have done in this case? Well for starters, instead of asking yes-or-no questions they should have found other ways of checking for understanding. More importantly, they should have socialized with their counterparts over dinner, drinks and karaoke. Building relationships is the way to build trust. Trust enables Chinese, Indians and other high-context people to ask questions - and to admit not understanding something!

(As we have noted, cultures change. In the last few years I have seen communication behavior beginning to change in parts of China. At recent seminars in Shanghai in Shenzhen attendees have asked questions and even occasionally challenged something I said.)

Speaking of Shenzhen, here is an experience from a workshop I conducted there three years ago for a Finnish company which was also having communication problems with Chinese counterparts.

“Why Doesn’t Our Finnish Customer Understand When ‘Yes’ Means No.”

A Finnish client had just taken on a new supplier in Shenzhen and was having communication problems. For example, when a Finnish engineer would ask his Chinese counterpart, “Are you sure you can complete this project by the deadline in two days,” the answer would always be yes. But very often the delivery would in fact be late.

The Finns asked me why the Chinese automatically replied yes when so often they really meant no. The Chinese on the other hand wanted to know why the Finns didn't understand them: "When we answer 'yes' to a Chinese customer, they always know when we really mean 'no'.

* * * * *

This is another example of the high/low-context difference. Chinese people usually understand the difference between a weak 'yes' and a real 'yes.' My Finnish client's engineers did not understand that for most Chinese it is a cultural imperative to avoid disappointing a high-status person such as a boss or a customer.

So we advised the Finns not ask yes-or-no questions. We also advised them to invite some of their key Shenzhen counterparts to Helsinki for total immersion in the Nordic low-context, direct communication culture and for building personal relationships.

So when does 'yes' really mean yes in high-context cultures?

- When it is said with emphasis;
- When it is said in a follow-up email accompanied with lots of detail;
- When you have a personal relationship with the individual who has answered 'yes'.

The following case is useful even though Norway, of course, does not border on the Baltic Sea. It illustrates the conflicts that can arise when Nordic egalitarian values encounter more hierarchical attitudes.

Nordic Values

Lars Torkelson is managing director of Airlift A/S, a Norwegian logistics company specialized in servicing offshore oil platforms from the mainland. He recently negotiated a tentative agreement with James Pembroke-Tarleton IV, head of a similar British firm, to carry out a joint logistics project in the North Sea.

The two CEOs agreed to have "key crew members" of both companies meet together for a couple of days in Oslo to get to know each other. Lars suggested starting off with a dinner meeting the first night.

When the British boss arrived at the restaurant with his deputy, Tarleton was surprised to see that Lars had invited all of his helicopter pilots along with his

whole team of mechanics and maintenance workers. “So, where are all your guys?” Lars asked with a smile as he poured James a cold beer.

“Well,” replied Pembroke-Tarleton stiffly, looking at the large Norwegian group, “This is not the way we do things in my company.”

Lars could see at once that cooperation between the two firms was not getting off to good start. He wondered how their joint project was going to work out.

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These two companies failed to come to agreement. The British boss was uncomfortable with his Norwegian counterpart’s informal approach to management and decided to look for another partner.

Although the Scandinavian model of management fits the Nordic cultures like a glove it may not work so well in hierarchical cultures, as we see from the last case.

A Danish Manager in France

Niels, a 38-year-old Dane was promoted by his company in Jutland to manage the firm’s subsidiary in France. Since Denmark and France are both Western European countries, neither Niels nor his company thought expatriate-preparation training was needed.

Unfortunately, management problems surfaced almost immediately. Unhappy with his local subordinates’ obvious lack of self-direction, during meetings Niels tried to build consensus for decisions rather than deciding all the issues himself. And when subordinates came to him with problems, Niels would listen and then try to help them solve the problem on their own.

For example he would ask, “What do you propose to do in this situation?” Or, “What do you see as some possible solutions here?” To his disappointment, the employee would usually stare at him, mumble something and walk away obviously unhappy.

Within weeks senior French employees were flooding the Danish company’s head office with complaints about the new manager’s incompetence. Shortly thereafter, Niels was recalled and given another assignment in Denmark.

From inquiries made at other firms in their industry association, top management learned that other Nordic firms had encountered similar difficulties in France. A consultant of French-Danish heritage was able to

throw light on the problem, explaining that the Scandinavian model of management works best in egalitarian societies. It may conflict with employee expectations in more hierarchical cultures, which make up the vast majority of the world's cultures.

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So an otherwise well-qualified expatriate manager failed because he was unable to adapt his management approach to fit the host country culture. This failure could have been avoided by offering Niels (and his family, if any) expatriate-preparation training, which these days is readily available in Western Europe.

These cases illustrate some of the ways in which the management cultures of the Baltic Sea region differ. Organizations active in this region would be well advised to understand these differences and prepare their employees to operate accordingly.

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Intercultural Competence as a Key Competence in Higher Education – Case Finland and Laurea

Arja Majakulma

The importance of intercultural competence is emphasised in several articles in this publication. Globalization, European integration, and global mobility of people affect the societies and working life everywhere in the world and in Finland as well. People with international and intercultural competences are needed not only when working in national or international companies or organisations abroad but also in their home country. The working environment is becoming more and more international and multicultural everywhere.

From an individual's point of view it is crucial that education provide the competences that are needed in working life in different environments and the ability to act in new ways. Expertise in a particular profession as such is not necessarily enough anymore. Professionals need social and cultural skills, knowledge of foreign cultures and societies as well as language skills and capabilities to meet diversity. Multicultural or intercultural competences are a prerequisite for successful action in the globalizing environment.

Education and research are key elements in the formation of a global environment. The international dimension of higher education is becoming increasingly important and at the same time, more and more complex. Internationalisation at home along with ethnic and cultural diversity will expand. Therefore diversity, equity and cultural differences have to be taken into consideration in education. (Knight 2008; Scott 2008)

National Guidelines and Recommendations

In Finland the Ministry of Education published a strategy for the internationalisation of higher education institutions in 2009 (Strategy for the internationalisation of higher education institutions in Finland 2009-2015). The strategy was drawn up using an open and interactive methodology. For the

preparation of the strategy, views on the subject were invited from higher education students and personnel as well as from the business community and other stakeholders. In the strategy the importance of intercultural competence was emphasised. Internationalization has been an essential part of higher education already for years, but earlier strategies have emphasised mobility of students and staff more than internationalisation at home. For the first time it was emphasised, that international and intercultural competence should be a part of all degree programs in higher education. The strategy provides guidelines for the internationalization of higher education institutions in Finland in 2009- 2015.

“The aim is to create an internationally strong and attractive higher education institution and research community that promotes society’s ability to function in an open international environment, supports the balanced development of a multicultural society and participates actively in solving global problems. The internationalization of Finnish higher education institutions is consolidated by improving the quality of higher education and research.” (p.10)

According to the strategy,

“The international operating environment of higher education institutions is changing rapidly. Finnish higher education institutions must compete increasingly harder to retain their position as producers, conveyors and utilizers of competence and new knowledge. The status of the higher education institutions is particularly affected by changes in knowledge production, international competition for talent, demographic changes, globalizing labor markets, increasing mobility of students and researchers, increased influence of policies pertaining to knowledge and competence, the ongoing Europe-wide modernisation of the higher education system, and expectations directed at higher education institutions to provide answers to global problems.” (p. 17).

One practical example of the change in the operating environment is that all professionals should have key competences in internationality: “Functioning in internationalizing working life requires that all individuals with higher education qualifications have interaction skills, good language skills and diverse cultural competence” (p. 20).

The strategy sets five primary aims for internationalization. One of them is “a genuinely international higher education community”. The goal is that Finnish

higher education takes into consideration and teaches the competence to work in an international operating environment.

“In a genuinely international higher education community, all the students, teachers, researchers and members of staff have the opportunity to achieve the competence for international cooperation and to participate in international activities. The international competence of students is consolidated by well-executed mobility periods abroad and high-quality course selection including international elements in Finland. The creation of international competence is systematically taken into account in planning the studies at all levels. Completion of studies within the target completion period requires that the development of international competence and the mobility of students are realised in a systematic manner.” (p. 26-28)

Measures to reach the goals were also introduced in the strategy. One of the measures is that

“higher education institutions will incorporate into all their degrees a module supporting internationalization. Its realization will be determined in personal study plans. The internationalization module will be completed with a mobility period or high-quality international courses. When required, the higher education institutions will consolidate field-specific and regional cooperation in order to organise foreign language teaching. International courses utilising e-learning will be added to education leading to a qualification and to open higher education consisting of its modules.” (p. 31)

Another primary aim in the strategy was “supporting a multicultural society”. According to this aim “higher education institutions should actively take part in supporting the multicultural higher education community and civil society”. The goal is that “the higher education institutions support the development of Finland into a multicultural society, which provides opportunities for intercultural interaction in which the relationship between various population groups is balanced and different social groups can co-exist in equal conditions.” “Higher education institutions actively provide students and personnel with the competencies to function in a multicultural higher education community, society and in global education, research and labor markets as well as promote positive attitudes towards multiculturalism. Multiculturalism and plurality are two-way processes that require

understanding and an appreciation of people's diversity. In higher education communities this means that people working within them promote equality and equal opportunities to participate. People with immigrant backgrounds and foreign exchange and degree students, teachers, researchers and other foreign personnel of higher education institutions in Finland are an important resource (p. 44-46)

These challenges should be taken into consideration in the higher education curricula. Finnish universities of applied sciences (UASs) have actively developed the curricula according to the European guidelines. In 2010 The Rectors' Conference of Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences (ARENE) gave recommendations on use of National Qualifications Framework (NQF) in Finnish UASs (ARENE ry 2010). According to the recommendations the competences in curricula should be divided to subject specific competences and generic competences. The subject specific competences form the basis of the student's professional development. The generic competences are common to different degree programs, but their specific features and importance can differ in different professions. They form the basis for acting in working life, co-operation, and development of expertise. European qualifications framework (EQF), NQF, legislation, Dublin Descriptors, Tuning Competences, and the requirements of working life have been taken into consideration in the descriptions of the generic competences. One of the generic competences is internationalization competence; the others are learning competence, ethical competence, working community competence, and innovation competence.

The description of a student's internationalization competence is as follows:

Bachelor's level

- Possesses communicative competence necessary for one's work and for professional development in the subject field
- Is able to operate in a multicultural environment
- Taking into account the effects of and opportunities for internationalization development in one's own field

Master's level

- Is capable of international communication in one's work and in the development of operations
- Is able to operate in international environments
- Is able to predict the effects of and opportunities for internationalization development in one's own field

Internationalization of the Curricula, Teaching & Learning at Laurea

Laurea University of Applied Sciences operates in the Greater Helsinki Metropolitan Area, which produces approximately 50% of Finland's gross domestic product. It competes and collaborates with other metropolitan areas around the world. Laurea's strategic development is directed particularly by the European and Finnish innovation policies and future competence needs (Laurea strategy 2010-2015). The share of population with immigrant background in the Helsinki region is the highest in Finland. The area also contains a significant concentration of HEIs and research institutions, innovative companies, and nationally important innovators.

In the educational system Laurea represents professional higher education. The aim of the UASs is to improve the quality of education and to respond to the changes in society and working life. In creating the UASs the Finnish higher education system became a dual system in which the two higher education sectors (universities and UASs) complete each other. The UASs are mainly multidisciplinary and regional institutions of higher education, which focus on interacting with working life and regional development. UASs are important regional factors and producers of labor force. They focus on their research and development activities to serve the development needs of their region. (Arene 2010)

At Laurea internationalization has been part of the curricula for several years, the emphasis has however differed in different degree programs and campuses. Laurea offers sixteen Bachelor's degree programs, six of which are totally in English. Additionally there are twelve Master's degree programs, two of which are conducted in English. The European Qualification Framework (EQF, level 6 Bachelor and 7 Master) has served as the foundation for the competence targets of Laurea's curriculum process, and Laurea's generic competences are comparable to the definitions for the European and national generic competences. A curriculum reform was made in 2010, but

globalization competence had been one of Laurea's generic competences already before that. In addition to the internationalization strategy also the performance agreement between Laurea and the Ministry of Education was taken into consideration in the latest curriculum reform. According to the performance agreement "Finnish higher education provides the competence to work in an international operating environment. The higher education institutions offer high-quality education focused on their fields of expertise and given in foreign languages."

The creation of new curricula starting from the academic year 2010-2011 provides Laurea's seven campuses with an opportunity to highlight their profiles also in the curricula. It was decided that all curricula will include international elements. This can consist of studies in foreign languages (minimum 30 ECTS), international contents, language and cultural studies, international joint studies (for example intensive programs or virtual studies) or materials and assignments in foreign languages and mobility. The implementation of the international elements for each student will be planned in personal curricula.

Internationalization is visible in the current curricula as well, and according to the self-evaluation feedback of graduates the graduates' good understanding of cultural differences and ability to cooperate with people from different cultural backgrounds, it has improved in the past years. The ability to use international sources of information of one's own field could be improved.

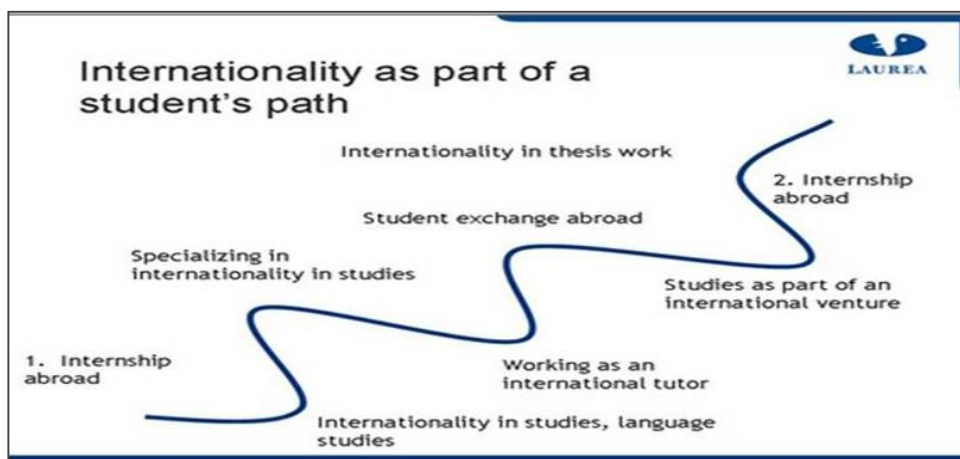


Figure 2. Internationality as part of a student's path

There are several ways to develop intercultural competence throughout the studies. Laurea has a network of around 150 cooperation organisations around the world. The collaboration between Laurea, partner universities and working life organizations enables the sharing of knowledge, expertise and practices. The most common way of cooperation with partner institutions is student mobility. It is also a very effective way to develop intercultural competence; international experience develops the ability to cope with demanding tasks and helps to improve language skills, knowledge of different cultures, cooperation skills and professionalism. According to the feedback that Laurea collects from all mobile students - outgoing and incoming - personal development, cultural experiences and improvement of language skills are the most important motivations to study abroad. These are also the areas that students report as the best results of mobility.

Student exchange is naturally not the only form of cooperation, and participation in intensive programs, joint degrees and other forms of cooperation develops the subject specific competences, but also the intercultural competence of all participants. Intensive programs offer a good opportunity for those students who are not able to go abroad for longer periods to benefit from the intercultural experience.

Laurea encourages the internationalization of its students through internationalization at home, because most students cannot participate in individual mobility or intensive programs. Last year Laurea collected feedback and opinions on its internationalization as part of its ongoing development. Laurea's strategic and other documents, different projects, staff interviews, learning cafes with staff, and students and student observations on internationalization were used as evaluation material (Laurea's architecture for internationalization). Internationalization of curricula, teaching and learning was considered from various angles in the discussion.

Laurea's wide-ranging language program makes it possible to study other languages and cultures - English and Swedish are compulsory for all students. In the feedback the students pointed out that even more possibilities for developing language skills are needed and the studies should be offered at all campuses.

It is also possible to complete studies in English, and as already mentioned, in the future it will also be compulsory. However, studying in a foreign language by itself does not necessarily develop intercultural skills, but the interaction between Finnish and international degree seeking or exchange students during

these studies can bring the extra value - if it is encouraged and supported. The need for better integration of Finnish and international students has been expressed at Laurea, by both international and Finnish students. Laurea could put more emphasis on insuring an equal mix between Finnish and foreign students and Finnish and English programs. This has also been pointed out in the studies on international degree seeking students in Finnish higher education (Aalto 2003; Ally 2002; Ciulinaru 2010; Kettunen 2005; Kinnunen 2003; Koivisto & Juusola 2008; Kärki 2005; Niemelä 2008; Niemelä 2009 a; Niemelä 2009 b; Puustinen-Hopper 2005; Taajamo 2005). Most students felt that they had integrated into Finnish society, but some did not feel integrated at all. The atmosphere among international students was good, but there was a lack of interaction with Finnish students, and generally with Finns. Interacting and functioning was often felt easier within the university environment than outside it. The students got familiar with the study culture, but not the Finnish culture.

Also Finnish students studying in English programs participated in the latest study of Niemelä (2009 b). A multicultural student community and a possibility to achieve international working life competences were strong areas in the programmes. The internationalization of student activities had made progress but the students still wished for more activities between different nationalities and degree programs. Moreover, the exchange students studying at Laurea and Laurea students studying abroad often mention in their feedback that the connection to the local culture could be better - this is the trend in all international exchange programs as well. It seems that the most obvious possibility for development of intercultural competence - interaction with people from different cultures who are present in the study environment - is not utilized in the best possible way. The program where local students act as tutors for international students has been very much appreciated by Laurea's international students and it effectively brings a possibility for interaction with people from different cultures to local students without having to go abroad.

International and intercultural issues and themes are an essential part of many compulsory and optional study units and international projects. International theme days, events, projects and visits by experts are part of the day-to-day operation of Laurea. However, according to the feedback collected from students international studies should be offered at all campuses so that all students would have reasonable opportunities to participate. An emphasis on the open access to participation in multicultural events, extracurricular

activities and seminars also arose from the feedback. Higher education institutions should have a role in the internationalization of the surrounding region as well, and some international seminars and multicultural events at Laurea have been open to the working life representatives and public as well. One good example of this is the learning about cultures using multisensory elements model that has been developed at Laurea. The need for more e-learning possibilities and more international projects was also expressed in the feedback.

Last but not least, the international experience and connections of the staff of higher education institutions also support the internationalization of the students. Laurea's teacher mobility has increased lately; incoming staff mobility also creates internationalization opportunities for Laurea staff. Additionally, staff members have the possibility of acting as "god-parents" for international students. Participation in international projects enhances the internationalization of staff members as well. Besides mobility staff internationalization is supported by offering training in English and intercultural competence by Laurea and through networks of higher education institutions in the Greater Helsinki Metropolitan Area. This could be emphasised even more as not only all students but also all staff members should have the possibility for intercultural interaction and education in this area - hopefully in the future it will be business as usual.

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The Baltic Sea – A Region of Possibilities. Experiences from the Finnish-Russian Working Environment

Anna Kotaviita

Disclaimer: this article represents the author's personal view and not necessarily the views of STETE.

The Baltic Sea region resembles a puzzle that is made of diverse identities and interests. It is usually defined by elements like geography, history, politics, and culture. The Baltic Sea itself is often described to be a sea bound by Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Germany and Russia. At the same time the region can be seen as more vivid and blurred. It is possible to expand the borders by including countries that have no direct seashore, such as Ukraine and Belarus, but do have important impact on its well-being. In fact, it is a challenging task to speak about the Baltic Sea region without its joint nature. Economy, environment, culture and politics do not respect the borderlines. Globalization has come to stay.

In my article *The Baltic Sea - A Region of Possibilities* I will go across the border from Finland to Russia and enlighten you on some points of intercultural activities between Finns and Russians. My main focus is on the Finnish-Russian working environment. I will also share some of my experiences from North-West Russia, as a tourist, student and an employee. It is important to keep in mind that Russia is an enormous country. It has 83 federal subjects and 14 neighbor states and each of these regions is unique. However, North-West Russia's location is an important area to the whole Russia and Europe; it is said to be a bridge between these two entities.

Some of the arguments presented in this article are my subjective opinions, but I wish to support them by referring to research on the Finnish-Russian business environment and multicultural communication. I will give my warm thanks to Anita Nousiainen whose Master's Thesis *Multilingual and cultural communication in Finnish-Russian working communities* (2010) has been a

great help for me when I have specified the key elements of the Finnish-Russian working environment. I would also like to thank the other authors of the articles in this great publication for sharing their knowledge on international communication and management.

From Past to Present - from Banned to Blurred

Research related to communication between Finns and Russians is always relevant. Russia still remains quite unknown for the vast majority of Finns even though the countries share more than 1 300 kilometers of common borderline and centuries of common history. Stereotypes still exist on both sides; the most common ones are related to Russian drinking habits and work ethics and on the other side to Finnish shy, slow and serious characters. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia opened its door for foreign influence and started to become more attractive for visitors and investors. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Germany's unity and the European Union enlargement, the Baltic Sea region has faced new challenges as well as possibilities. The region has become increasingly international and businesses continue to expand overseas. This has increased the need of well-structured communication strategies. Management skills play a great role with regard to successful cross-border cooperation, not only at the bilateral but also at the multilateral level.

I visited Russia for the first time just a few months after Vladimir Putin had been elected for President in spring 2000. Back then it was difficult to find any labels or public signs not written in the Cyrillic alphabet in the street view. It was rare to get service in any other language than Russian. Ten years after not knowing the local language is not an excuse not to visit, for example, St. Petersburg. There is a wide variety of services available in English and some other languages as well. The St. Petersburg area is already home to approximately 4000 Finns and around 500 Finnish companies. The high speed train line and visa free boat trip between Helsinki and St. Petersburg are good examples of increased attraction towards Russia.

Russia has a long history of bilateral agreements with other countries. However, there are instruments and so called frameworks that are planned to increase the interaction between Russia and the other states in the Baltic Sea region. The Northern Dimension (ND) policy was drawn up in 1999. It is a common policy shared by four equal partners: the European Union, Norway, Iceland and the Russian Federation. The policy aims to promote dialogue and

concrete cooperation and strengthen stability and well-being, especially in the field of economic integration, competitiveness and sustainable development. Later at the St. Petersburg Summit in May 2003, the EU and Russia agreed to reinforce their co-operation by creating four common long-term spaces in the framework of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (1997), which, besides security and economic issues, includes also research, education and cultural aspects. Still, the most effective cooperation projects are in the sphere of civil society, including education and environment. Grass root activities are usually effective on a regional level, because they have better possibilities to react fast and carry out small scale face-to-face exercises.

A Step across the Border, a Step for Working Life

One of the most important decisions that have been put into force between the EU and Russia is the European Higher Education Arena, Bologna Process that aims to make academic degree standards more comparable throughout Europe. This has increased the mobility of students and research in the Baltic Sea region and the attractiveness of the higher education system in Russia. The system came into force in October 2007, the same autumn when I started my exchange studies at St. Petersburg State University in the faculty of journalism. The European exchange students who started at the same time were happy and relieved that the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) was adopted and easily included in the European degree.

However, this did not eliminate the bureaucracy we had to face at the university. To get the visa regulations, health care certifications and registrations done took nearly two months. That was almost one third of the whole exchange period. At first I was not aware of the challenges I had to tackle; misunderstandings, lack of cultural competence, taboos and negotiations skills. On the other hand, I was not aware that I would bind lasting friendships and learn new customs, deepen my cultural and language knowledge and see countless interesting places and discussions. Afterwards standing in different queues for hours waiting for documents, obligatory HIV-tests or sometimes not even knowing what, does not feel that significant anymore.

Besides meeting new people and getting to know the local culture, taking the step across the state border can also be a push for working life. An international environment usually improves social and language skills and cultural sensitivity. I stress that observation can also be a good method of

getting acquainted with local life. Just watching people pass by from the bus window or at a city café, listening to radio or watching TV and so on are effective instruments, because they apply smoothly to everyday tasks. I sat at the Russian language lessons for a few months with Chinese students without understanding a word. Suddenly after each class and each TV program I started to learn more and more by observing, not forgetting discussion with locals. After a bit over one and a half years when I moved back to Finland, I could follow the news and understand discussions in Russian well.

Personal experiences of living abroad can be advantageous in the labor market, especially if the tasks are related to cross cultural issues. Afterwards it is clear to see a path along which my decisions took me; after the exchange period the door to the Finnish consulate's visa section opened for me, followed by an internship period at the Murmansk branch office for tasks related to media monitoring and finally back to Finland and to the Finnish Committee for European Security (STETE). STETE is an organization oriented to promote broad security (defined by the OSCE) in the Baltic Sea region and in the EU's Eastern Neighbouring areas by organizing seminars and producing publications on relevant topics. So, my intercultural highway has not come to an end yet. On the contrary, it has totally tied me for good. And I was not the only lucky one. Nearly all of my friends from EU countries with whom I spent time in St. Petersburg have found a job abroad or are working in their home countries at jobs related to international issues such as business, state affairs, education and journalism.

Key Elements of Successful Communication

I once heard a question asked "How can you make cooperation between countries in the sphere of culture?" The context of culture in this instance was extremely narrow; the person who asked the question understood culture to comprise only visual, literary and performing arts such as painting or poetry. Art is part of culture and vice versa, but culture itself is more than only art. It is a multi-layer complex consisting of languages, history, identity, and so on. Communication is everywhere and it is such an essential part of everyday life that its existence is often forgotten. It is like breathing; we automatically do it but do not pay attention to it as long as it goes smoothly.

Communicational nuances vary across cultures. They have various forms, both verbal and non-verbal. In order to develop successful communication methods and mutual understanding, it is important to increase cooperation between

countries in the Baltic Sea region. Cooperation is needed especially in the field of research and development as well as education and culture, but also between institutions and people working on common challenges. Without the knowledge of each other's history and cultural nuances, the risk of increasing misunderstandings and mistrust grows. Better knowledge of each other and people to people contact are especially important among the young.

It has been argued what the key elements of successful communication are in a multicultural environment. It is evident that successful communication consists of numerous elements and just common language alone cannot be the key. A functional multicultural and multilingual environment needs well organized internal and external communication strategies and clear language usage rules. Communication can happen between two and up to thousands or even millions of people and it can be almost any action.

In the business world English is usually the official working language (*lingua franca*) if the owner of the company comes from the "West". It means that official documents, negotiations and meetings are in English. However, it is usual that micro groups are formed inside of working communities among the people who share the same language. This creates a challenge; if a message does not reach all employees, it will create mistrust, unclearness and unnecessary work.

People feel that their work is appreciated only if they are paid attention to and important information is available to everybody. I had to face this in real life when I dealt with the personnel of the international office for exchange students in St. Petersburg. It was not very surprising that most of the students from EU countries expected discussion to be in Russian or in English, or something in between which turned out to be a false assumption - we would do well in German. On the other hand, when I worked for the Finnish consulate, a clear majority of the Russian customers spoke Russian to the Finnish personnel and the Finns only used Finnish with each other. It is clear that governmental organizations use their own language as the main working language in most of the cases but it does not dispel the situation mentioned above.

Based on my experiences from intercultural communities, I argue that successful communication is not dependent on sharing the same language, but rather on open minded attitudes, common interests and patience. A win-win situation drives people to look for effective tools and strategies for finding solutions to problems. Common interest does not necessarily mean measurable

elements such as capital - it can be, for example, the willingness to understand an interesting discussion, a way to negotiate with a landlord about monthly rent, trying to cope with larger scale environmental issues or doing business across the borders. Respect is one of the unwritten fundamental pillars of intercultural communication. Openness, tolerance and appreciation towards other people create trust and good atmosphere and a joint feeling of being together. Tolerance also means accepting different working practices and how people deal with everyday tasks.

Finnish-Russian Working Communities

In her thesis, Anita Nousiainen (2010) defines the challenges and experiences that people face in Finnish-Russian companies. Her arguments are based on the interviews and questionnaires she collected during 2009 in St. Petersburg from staff members of companies belonging to the said category. She stresses that on both sides, the knowledge of the foreign colleagues' language among the employees was rather low. According to Nousiainen (2010), what the Russians found most problematic was the way in which the Finnish culture and language was dominating the interaction. The Russians felt that they were left outside, which created unclear communication and misunderstandings. The aforementioned phenomena are common stumbling stones of successful communication.

According to Nousiainen (2010) the companies surveyed tried to solve the possible complications in advance. As the solution the Russians suggested that Finns should acquaint themselves with the Russian business world and that they should not try to solve everyday tasks by using only Finnish methods. The Finns found spreading information successfully to all employees most challenging. Learning to understand cultural nuances is a long process. Awareness of the major cultural taboos prevents misunderstandings. Both the Finns and Russians mentioned that the positive side of working in a multicultural environment is that they can get to know a new culture. Everyday tasks were also mentioned to be easier when human resources included natives. For the Finns the feeling of success in the working community was based on the experiences of living in Russia whereas for the Russians language was the key element. Both nationalities agreed that working in a Finnish-Russian environment is not especially difficult.

The companies that took part in the evaluation faced language related difficulties every day. There are different solutions to these difficulties, for

example various instruments such as using translators and online dictionaries. Juholin (2003) notes that meetings and gatherings, newsletters and memos, staff magazines, and internal intranet networks are good ways of building trust inside communities. Challenges are mostly related to the everyday tasks, such as face-to-face appointments. According to Nousiainen (2009) the companies increased their knowledge of each other by organizing study visits and a culture orientation period for the employees at the beginning of the agreement. Nevertheless, language requirements and expertise in local nuances are not the only factors of success in business anymore; nowadays business education is becoming valued over language skills.

Management Traditions

There are evident management differences between the Finnish and Russian traditions. Russians rely on strong leaders whereas the Finnish tradition regards each employee as an equal part of the team whose members are all valued for their input. In the Finnish culture, responsibility is divided between all group members, although the final decision making still remains in the hands of the employer. Taking initiative is more of a rule than an exception. It is expected that employees complete regular tasks without mentioning them separately and do a bit more than asked. Strong individuality can also lead to unsure situations, especially if the task is new; sometimes people do not want to admit publicly that they did not understand the assignment. To Russians it is not a question of pride to ask for further directions.

Russian management traditions date back to the Communist period when Russian companies got used to strong vertical, top-down communication and weaker horizontal communication. The tradition reflects the way managers delegate responsibility. This can be seen even today. In Russia, companies use formal, vertical channels to increase the number of internal communications. These include the intranet, newsletters and regular meetings. Finnish companies use the same methods, but the employees also receive information and share it more likely with their colleagues whereas Russian information sharing is based on personal relations. (Fey, Pavlovskaya and Tang, 2004)

However, a change is coming. The younger generations are securing top-level positions in the corporations and they are willing to work for the best practices and the success of the company in the modern markets (Fey, Nordahl and Zätterström 1999). This will be a significant step towards the growth of intercultural environments in Russia. Besides work, the young generations also

appreciate free time and salary is spent also on leisure, travelling and consumption. Another big change is apparent in the time culture. Russians have been considered flexible with schedules and deadlines, but the increase in foreign influences in working communities has generated the adaptation of more strict standards of schedules. To Finns, to meet deadlines tells about reliability and effectiveness.

Stylistically different management methods are a challenge to Finnish-Russian working communities. Russian employees are expecting precisely defined tasks and orders from their managers while Western employers expect Russian workers to work towards the company's common goal. According to Nousiainen (2010) Finns classify the Russian work culture as very hierarchical, formal and not having progressed remarkably since the early 1990s. Russians generally value age, rank, and protocol. One of the most important differences between these two actors is the way they address people formally: Finns address people formally extremely seldom, that is, only if the person addressed is working in a very high position or elderly; in Russia almost all people are addressed formally except the young generation. If Finns do not respect this golden rule, they are most probably considered to be rude and ill-mannered. The polite way of addressing people covers the whole sphere of society and not only working communities.

Western people in Russia must get used to the importance of personal relationships. At least personal discussions and confidence seem to be more important for Russians than for Finns. (Mashkina et al 2005). For Finnish leaders it is normal to go straight to the point without small talk and focus primarily on business. For cultures where formality and hierarchy are valued high, the Finnish way of doing business can be uncomfortable, and even accusingly harsh. To Finns this is merely a way to spare time and use the time spent as effectively as possible. Russians, especially the older generation, do not like rushing things and it takes time to get them warmed up towards foreign business people.

In the first part of this article I mentioned the stereotypes about Finns being slow by character. This stereotype has some truth to it. Even though Finland is understood to be the country of high technology, which usually means fast reaction skills and innovation, this does not always apply to what happens inside the meeting rooms. In fact, to Finns it is sometimes difficult to cope with the idea of change which is not often received with enthusiasm. Finns are interested in long-term rather than short-term goals and sometimes change is seen as a risk which is why they want to stick to old manners.

One must keep in mind that summaries are gross simplifications when speaking of differences between people and their cultures. I have many stereotypes to negate. The Finnish Committee for European Security (STETE) organized the Nordic Forum for Security Policy “Freedom, Security and Justice - common interests in the Baltic Sea region” in St. Petersburg in April 2010. Our main partners were from Russia, Sweden and Germany so the forum was a mixture of different management styles towards the same goal; gathering people ranging from prestigious politicians to grass root level non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to researchers to discuss the same challenges. In total the forum brought together more than 120 participants from all over the Baltic Sea region.

Managing such an event is extremely challenging and a well planned strategy was more than needed. The official working language varied from English to Russian to Swedish and Finnish depending on the language skills of the staff. The visa regulations and technical abilities also created special challenges. For example fax is still used when inviting Russian and Belarusian participants to the forum. Despite the challenges the forum was successful and started new initiatives based on the discussions and networking. In conclusion, time, open information exchange with partners, patience, organizational skills and local human resources are valuable instruments when organizing big international events. The number of employees is not as important as the issues mentioned above. For example, most of the organizational work was done by STETE as a main partner that is usually run by only 2-3 persons. STETE has organized the Nordic Forum for Security Policies every second year since the late 1980s. The next forum is planned to take place in Vilnius, Lithuania in 2012.

Conclusion

The Baltic Sea region contains all the potential to overcome the old challenges that hinder its progress towards being a region where different cultures and shared goals co-exist and support each other. Attraction towards the Baltic Sea region has grown since the collapse of the Soviet Union and it is becoming widely understood that the region’s well-being is dependent on successful cooperation between cultures and not only state affairs. The importance of intercultural communication is more acute than ever and the need of exchanging best practices grows.

Finland and Russia are good examples of how meaningful, yet relatively unknown neighboring countries can be to each other. The Finns who do

business or other cooperation with Russians are really active, but the number of people is not that large. It is normal that a Finnish person can find some common friend when meeting a new compatriot in Russia. In the future the main challenge lies in how to popularize these interests and cultural knowledge in the EU's Eastern neighbors. Today language issues are not an excuse to avoid cooperation. Especially smaller projects by civil society actors and cooperation between universities are effective. People to people contacts are important and they have a positive impact on increasing mutual understanding, binding new relationships and networks between different countries.

The Finnish and Russian ways of organizing things are different. Not overwhelming, but clearly distinguishable. A good example of this is from one hiking trip I participated in near the White Sea. The Finnish and Russian participants could not agree on what dinner ingredients to pack, because the path was long and we had to carry all food in our backpacks. Eventually both decided to take what they wanted. The Finns chose canned food as opposed to the Russians' heavy cabbages and other vegetables. At the camping site we decided to put all ingredients together - the combination resulted in a tasty soup.

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Intercultural Communication as a Factor of Creating the European Social Identity

Maria Jastrebska

Introduction

The ever closer European Union (EU) has recently faced many changes, taking place inside and outside the Community. The globalization process, deriving inter alia from technology and communications development, seems to be the most important external factor of changes.¹ Enlargements of the Union, which took place in 2004 and 2007 and were mainly a result of the collapse of the “Iron Curtain” and the Soviet System in the Central and Eastern Europe in 1989, seem to be a crucial cause of the internal changes within the EU. Since 1st May 2004, Czech Republic, Poland, Slovakia, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Slovenia, Hungary and also Cyprus and Malta, have been EU Member States. Romania and Bulgaria were accepted on 1st January 2007 and the new official candidates are Croatia, Macedonia, and Turkey.² The aforementioned factors cause the increase of cultural differentiation within the EU, and a growing need of effective intercultural communication between the EU citizens of distinct origins.

The establishment of the common market and currency of the European Union and ultimately removing borders between the Member States require ever deeper political and cultural integration. According to the Lisbon Treaty (full name: Treaty of Lisbon amending the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty establishing the European Community),³ which came into force on 1st December 2009,⁴ Member States are joint by the common cultural, religious and humanistic heritage. The values that the EU is founded on, the most important of which are: the inviolable and inalienable human rights, freedom, democracy, equality and rule of law, derive from the said common heritage.⁵ Referring to these values, the EU creates a standard by which its citizens are obliged to proceed. These values could therefore be considered as a basis for the citizens’ identification with the EU and the body of the process of creating the European social identity. Unfortunately, the general heritage and the set of values do not appear to be sufficient. There still occur bouts of nationalism

and xenophobia, which inhibit the creation of the European social identity that could be based on EU citizenship.

The introduction of the citizenship of the Union with the Treaty of Maastricht, (the full name: The Treaty on European Union),⁶ which came into effect on 1st November 1993,⁷ was a precedent in the realm of international organizations. Moreover, with the Treaty of Lisbon coming into force, the European Union has become an international organization holding a single legal personality.⁸ Although this strengthens the EU's external position, the Community still remains internally diverse, due to cultural, legal and economical differences between the Member States. Thus, EU citizenship is not an ultimately defined institution, and the European social identity would have to be a completely new quality. These issues raise the following questions: Is it possible for the social identity of Europeans to come into existence? What are the necessary conditions for this process that would have to be met?

Citizenship of the European Union

EU citizenship as introduced by the Treaty of Maastricht raised many controversies for many years. As a political and legal concept, citizenship refers to the rights and duties of citizens of a nation-state.⁹ However, the European Union is not a state, and EU citizenship is supplementing the nationalities of the Union's Member States. Holding EU citizenship depends on holding the nationality of an EU Member State.¹⁰ Therefore, there is no uniform procedure for granting citizenship of the European Union. EU citizenship seems to be one of the steps taken to strengthen the political and cultural integration of the Community, although it grows out of the primary economic integration, based mainly on the free movement of persons, goods, services and capital.¹¹ The latest stage in the development of EU citizenship was the Lisbon Treaty, which introduced the Charter of Fundamental Social Rights into the Union's primary law. The Charter aims to ensure better protection of EU citizens, to respect and preserve their civil, political, economic and social rights. EU citizenship has acquired the character of a basis for the Union's democratic civil society. The rights granted to EU citizens in the Maastricht Treaty are maintained and supplemented (see Table).¹²

Art.	The Maastricht Treaty PART II: Citizenship of the Union	Lisbon Treaty TITLE II: Provisions on democratic principles	Charter of Fundamental Rights: Citizens' rights
8	Establishes the citizenship of the EU. Anyone who has the nationality of a Member State is a citizen of the EU.	The Union shall respect the equality of its citizens. They receive equal attention from its institutions, bodies and agencies. An EU citizen is a person who holds the nationality of a Member State. Citizenship of the Union shall be additional to the national and not replace it.	
8a	The right to freedom of movement and residence within the territory of the Member States (under certain conditions of the treaty).	The functioning of the Union is founded on representative democracy. Every citizen has the right to participate in the democratic life of the Union. Political parties at European level will contribute to forming a European awareness and to expressing the political will of EU citizens.	Article 45 Freedom of movement and residence.
8b	The right to active and passive voting rights in elections to the European Parliament and the right to active and passive voting rights in elections to local governments across the country in which the citizen resides.	Proclaims more efficient communication with the representatives of EU institutions and civil society, enabling citizens and representative associations of public dialogue in all areas of EU action. The right of the citizens' initiative: one million citizens from different Member States may ask the Commission to submit a new proposal.	Article 39 Right to vote and stand in elections to the European Parliament. Article 40 Right to vote and stand in municipal elections.
8c	The right to diplomatic and consular protection, in the country where on its territory is an agency of any Member State of the Union, while the country of origin is not represented there.		Article 46 Diplomatic and consular protection.
8d	The right to petition the European Parliament. The right to appeal to the European Ombudsman.		Article 43 European Ombudsman. Article 44 Right to petition.
			Article 41 The right to good administration.
			Article 42 The right of access to documents.

Table 1. The rights given by EU citizenship

EU citizenship proclaims equality of all citizens, however, the accession of the new Member States in 2004 and 2007, and the related challenges of economic, social and legal provenience, have become an impediment for the immediate

and full application of the EU *acquis* on free movement and residence to the new Member States,¹³ which seems to be a repeal of the prohibition of discrimination on grounds of nationality. Moreover, the Union's citizenship is not based on the existence of a European society which is similar to the societies of the nation-states.

Deeper integration within the EU, including the aspects in the Treaty of Lisbon, is taken in the name of spreading democracy and creating the civil society of the EU. In the author's point of view, a significant difficulty lies within the cultural differentiation of the Union as well as in economic, legal and social inequalities. The Union's motto "United in diversity",¹⁴ seems to stress, that the social identity of Europeans is to be multi-cultural but based on shared rights and values. The questions of its possibility and how it would occur remain open.

Paul Magnette's Conception of "Being European"

Paul Magnette assumes, that "EU citizenship is not only a set of rights, but also of civic behaviors and representations."¹⁵ Based on examining the sociological and moral foundations of EU citizenship, Magnette claims that it should not be considered in terms of the sociology of a nation-state. He regards "(...) the evolution of EU citizenship as a process of political recognition",¹⁶ which is divided into three layers : "(...) critical assessment of one's own national identity; transformation of the perception of other nationalities; and identification to the EU."¹⁷ Magnette also stresses that "mutual recognition" is a process that never ends and does not preclude tensions, nationalistic reactions, hegemonic aspirations and xenophobic attitudes. It is impossible to clearly determine its trajectory. Therefore, the concept of creating the European identity is still exposed to the risk of failure, especially since EU citizenship was not established from the bottom up.

Magnette is of the opinion that: "(...) European citizenship has become a "social fact."¹⁸ This conclusion, as he further writes, can be drawn from observing the behavior of the nationals of Member States, who simply go shopping in the neighboring country, are looking for work in a foreign city or accede to international organizations.¹⁹ In other words, they enjoy the right to freedom of movement and residence within the EU and the prohibition of discrimination on grounds of nationality.

According to Magnette, many of the concepts of the European identity are based on the assumption that the Union is similar to an arising state. Therefore, the collective representations should undergo a process of vertical integration. Functional theories have proposed a hypothesis of "shifting loyalties", which implies that the increasingly transnational contacts would lead to the convergence of perspectives. Thus, an awareness of the shifting centers of power would lead to political action, focusing on the supranational power. The newly-formed Europe - understood and evaluated positively by its citizens - would establish their loyalty and further the European social identity.²⁰ Magnette, however, believes that this pattern of analysis does not match reality. As he emphasizes, since the Maastricht Treaty, transferring the Member States' sovereignty to the Union is avoided. The competence of the Community is rather deepened than extended. New areas of joint activities are managed on a collaborative basis. The representation of Member States in the EU institutions increases and the lead in the Community is held rather by the European Council than by the Commission.²¹ Magnette argues that: "A perfect example of this is the semantics of the late Constitutional Treaty: never had a European treaty multiplied to such an extent the periphrasis on the respect of the prerogatives of the state and of national identities."²²

The Constitutional Treaty (full name: The Treaty establishing a constitution for Europe), signed on 29th October 2004, was to be the basis of the EU institutional reform.²³ Notwithstanding, because it was rejected in referenda held in France and Netherlands in 2005,²⁴ the Treaty of Lisbon has become the reform treaty.²⁵ As a result, the European Council has become an official EU institution. It holds no legislative function, but sets guidelines for the activities and objectives of the EU.²⁶ The roles of the European Parliament and national parliaments have increased. The European Parliament is equipped with new powers over EU legislation, budget and international agreements. The scope of the co-decision procedure has been expanded, which provides the European Parliament with an equal footing with the Council for the bulk of the EU legislation. National parliaments are gaining a larger share in the work of the EU. A significant step, taken with the Lisbon Treaty, is also the introduction of the possibility of abandoning the Union.²⁷ These facts described above do not conduct to the establishment of a supranational, European state.

These phenomena mentioned by Magnette translate well to the level of a unit. With the hypothesis of "shifting loyalties"²⁸ an assumption appeared that EU citizens would relocate a sense of loyalty to the nation-states into a new "European state" as a result of the vertical integration of the EU. The biggest

problem in the integration within the Community might therefore be the fear of losing national identities and of cultural homogenization. EU citizenship would then have stood in a conflict with the national citizenships. However, the public opinion is that there is no sharp conflict between national identity and recognition as a European. According to Magnette, as measured by Eurobarometer, national pride is strong in Europe, with around nine out of ten respondents saying that they are proud of their nationality. It does not prevent them, however, to identify with Europe, as demonstrated by statements of a sense of pride in being European which was reported by seven out of ten Europeans surveyed in late 2004.²⁹ Moreover, as shown by Lauren M. McLaren, while there is a fear of integration among the EU citizens, it derives less from the fear of losing national identity than from the fear of an economic loss, and thus a welfare decrease. According to McLaren, the EU is not seen as a major threat to the national cultures and identities, but it is rather perceived through the prism of the costs and benefits it brings.³⁰

As shown above, Magnette believes that the integration of the EU runs out horizontally rather than vertically. Therefore, as he further argues, the dynamics of the process of identification with the Union can be captured more adequately by using the category of “recognition” rather than “loyalty.”³¹ Magnette presents the concept of EU citizenship, which takes into account both the diversity of national identities in Europe as well as the citizens’ direct identification with Europe and the process of interaction between these two variables. In Magnette’s opinion, a political theory of recognition developed by Paul Axel and Honneth Ricoeur, which departs from the pattern of vertical integration and the hypothesis of “transfer of allegiance” mentioned above, is useful for thinking about EU citizenship and the European social identity.³² According to this theory, as Magnette assumes, the process of creating a community, understood as a dynamic of “recognition”, is observed on three interrelated levels: 1) the relationship of individuals to themselves, 2) the institutional relationships between the individual actors 3), the reflexive relationships of socialized actors to the world as a whole.³³

As Magnette interprets, these levels are not successive stages, but logically related parts of a single process. Magnette writes: “Mutual recognition” is first a horizontal process that establishes a relationship to the other and strengthens self-respect (it is only by feeling recognised by another that one esteems oneself and it is only through self-esteem that we are able to understand and respect the other). This double base is the necessary condition for vertical identification with the group: identifying with a group is only

possible if one has a stabilised personal identity and if one recognises and respects the other members of the group.”³⁴

After applying the above analytical framework to the EU citizens, Magnette formulated the following hypothesis: “(...) the connection to Europe is not a simple conflict between the national and the European level, but a more complex process in which three elements are simultaneously at play:

- a transformation of the citizen’s national identity;
- a change in the (horizontal) links between citizens from different nationalities ;and
- the creation of a (vertical) bond between the citizens and Europe.

Being a European citizen does not mean only ‘feeling European’ but also and mostly being a national differently and having a bond of mutual recognition with nationals of other Member States.”³⁵

“Mutual Recognition” as a Process of Intercultural Communication

The author of this paper interprets that Paul Magnette assumes that EU citizens should make continuous changes of attitudes, simultaneously towards their own national identities and nationalities of citizens of the other EU states. This means defining one’s own national identity through confrontation with nationals of different origins, and further the “mutual recognition” of culturally various EU citizens with equal rights under EU citizenship. This requires distancing oneself from one’s own culture and abandoning the tendency to an exclusive national point of view. Such horizontal interactions can lead to a sense of solidarity and the creation of the community.³⁶ Only at this level, an opportunity to vertical ties with the Union occurs, the functioning of which is based on rights that are jointly defined and respected by all Member States.

The EU itself in this perspective cannot be regarded as a dispatcher for a specific, unchangeable recognition of the European social identity. The Union ought to be a coordinating structure for a fluid social space, characterized by a pluralism of values. The Community’s law must refrain from a tendency to unilateralism and exclusivity. Such an approach to EU citizenship and the European social identity would be a process, which would not support the threat of cultural homogenization leading to the loss of national identities. It is, however, very important to emphasize that this requires continuous

recognition of culturally distinct perspectives during the processes of decision-making and any political actions.

According to Marnette, the right of free movement and residence within the EU and the prohibition of discrimination on grounds of nationality are the backbone of EU citizenship, which might gradually bring the European social identity into existence.³⁷ EU citizens cannot be treated as strangers while residing in a Member State different than the country of origin. On one hand, they should be treated throughout the EU as if they were in the country of origin, and on the other hand, they should not impose their own cultural perspective as elite and exclusive. Through such processes of interactions among European citizens, effective intercultural communication would be possible, and the transnational relationships and civil society could be built.³⁸

Conclusion

Taking everything into account, the author of this paper concludes that it is possible for the social identity of Europeans to come into existence under certain conditions. Moreover, it is necessary, if the Union is to integrate as deeply as it is aimed in the Treaty of Lisbon. Possibility, however, does not mean certainty, thus the process of creating the EU social identity does not have a predictable final stage. According to Paul Marnette, it even seems to be endless and exposed to the risk of failure, as it has not been derived from the bottom up, and due to its dependency on interactions between individual actors.

The individual actors' interactions are the basis of every society. The citizenship of the Union gives an opportunity of transnational contacts among EU citizens of distinct origins, under the right to free movement and residence within the EU, and the prohibition of discrimination on grounds of nationality. An equal adoption of these rights and the concept of "mutual recognition" by Marnette seem to be inevitable for the social identity of Europeans to come into existence. Thus, effective intercultural communication remains one of the crucial factors of the creation of the European social identity. EU citizenship might be a proper basis of the process, but the European identity and the EU civil society seem to be possible only if they derive from interactions between individuals, who are culturally different, but equal through the prism of the EU law.

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37. Paul Magnette defines solidarity as Axel Honneth: „as an interactive relationship in which subjects mutually sympathise with their various different ways of life because, among themselves, they esteem each other symmetrically.(...) by deploying itself horizontally, mutual recognition sets the base for the construction of a community and of direct identification with it.”, [in:] P. Magnette, op.cit., p. 675.
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PIM Study Project Organizations

The PIM consortium wishes to thank the companies listed here for their cooperation with the student teams. The representatives of these companies have kindly taken the time to help the students with their company visit projects by sharing experiences and insight on intercultural matters.

2006 Riga, Latvia

SRS, Customs Criminal Board
Czech Airlines
Unicef Latvia
Schenker Logistics
Worldwide Delaval
Systemair Riga
Armuss
Transcom Worldwide Latvia

2007 Eckernförde, Germany

Galerie Nemo Eckernförde
Green Screen Film Festival
Presse-und Informationszentrum
Marine
Sauer & Sohn
Arge - Federal Agency For Work
Behn Originale
Punker GmbH & Co

2008 Tallinn, Estonia

The Estonian Ministry of Culture
Port of Tallinn
KuMu- The Estonian Art Museum
Webmedia AS
Sokos Hotel Viru
St. Olav Hotel
AS Prisma Peremarket
Aqris Software AS

2009 Alytus, Lithuania

State Department of Tourism
Hotel Senas Namas
Hotel Vaidila
Kitokie Projekantai
Dvarčionių Keramikai
Achema AB Group
Fima

2010 Bydgoszcz, Poland

Best Inn Bydgoszcz
Galerie Miejska BWA Bydgoszcz
Leon Wyczółkowski District Museum
Moje Miasto Bydgoszcz
Opera Nova w Bydgoszczy
Teatr Polski Bydgoszcz
Bydgoszcz Tourist Information
Centre
Bydgoszcz City Hall

As working life is becoming increasingly demanding when it comes to the ability to cope with cultural challenges, people seek new ways to gain intercultural expertise. For higher education students, spending an exchange period abroad has been a popular approach to internationalize their studies and increase cultural awareness. Despite the ever increasing exchange possibilities there are many students who do not have the resources to go abroad for a whole semester. “Promoting Intercultural Management for Working Life in the Baltic Sea Region” is a study course that was created to offer an easily accessible opportunity to experience a multicultural study environment in form of a two-week intensive program.

“Promoting Intercultural Management for Working Life in the Baltic Sea Region - A Five-Year Project. Thoughts, Experiences and Impact” provides a comprehensive overview on how one specific partner consortium of higher education institutions has contributed to international student and teacher mobility and network creation by realizing an intensive program. The included texts by various authors offer a versatile and lively insight to arranging and experiencing intensive programs as well as highlight the importance of Intercultural Management in education and working life. Whether your interests lie in student exchange possibilities, the arranging of multicultural study programs or intercultural management in general, you will gain useful information by taking the time to read the texts in this publication.

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